

ADAM

2'-

OCTOBER, 1963

FACT • FICTION • HUMOR

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RETURN TO GLORY
—page 30



See! No dandruff.



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ADAM

OCTOBER • 1963

Vol 35 • No 5

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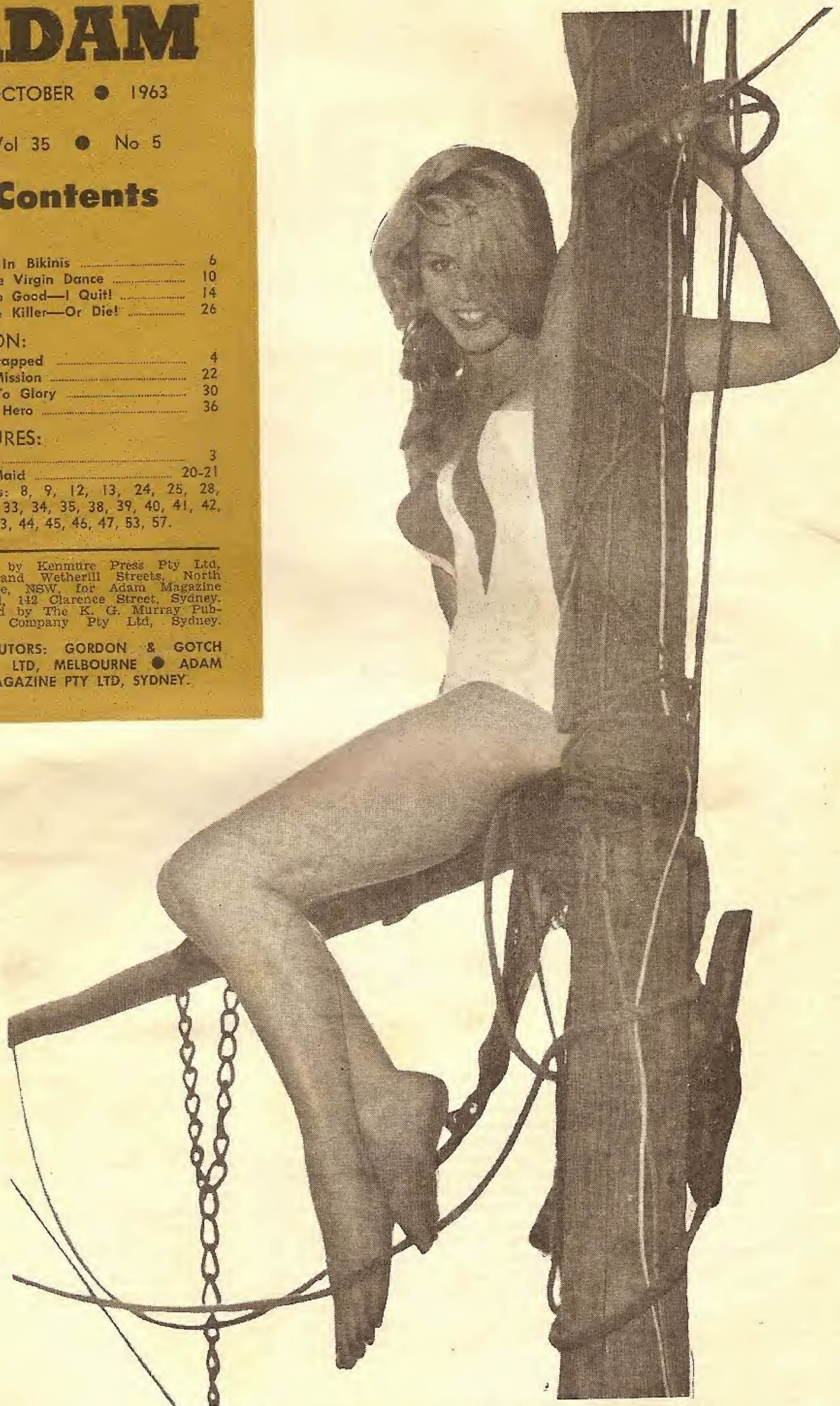
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BOOBY-TRAPPED

FICTION • JAMES CAMPBELL

I had three suspects—a penniless demolition expert, a small-time hood, and a ruthless female dedicated to killing. From there on I had to work partly by deduction and partly by hunch . . .

AS soon as I entered the room I knew someone had been. Someone skilled, too. Because that someone had checked everywhere for nearly-invisible threads. And, having found them, he had substituted, before leaving, new unbroken threads. Yes, he had known his job all right — I'd find all my carefully hidden threads unbroken and immediately assume that the place was exactly as I had left it. But he hadn't reckoned on one thing; that I always kept a couple of pieces of thread hanging from two of the legs of the table. He'd seen these and had immediately concluded that they'd been taut, that somehow or another he hadn't seen the thread and that he had broken it. *So he'd substituted a new one.* And the second I saw that thread I knew I'd had a visitor.

I stood stock-still at the door, my eyes exploring the interior of the room. This character, as he'd been pretty expert in covering up that he'd been prowling about the room, was probably an expert in something else too — in installing a booby-trap. I mean, it fitted — if he'd been out to give me the works directly he wouldn't have bothered to visit my room and then to try to cover up — he'd have caught me outside somewhere and got me then. Yes, everything pointed to the fact that a booby-trap had been rigged up inside. *But where?*

Now if you ever by any remote chance get to the stage when you suspect that somebody has installed a booby-trap in your room you certainly don't start looking for it! To the contrary, you take one



smart step backwards and you summon the police. But me, I couldn't summon the police. For just about two thousand reasons! And besides, I particularly wanted to find that booby-trap. Once I had found it I could render it harmless. And once I had done that maybe I could use the thing to catch whoever had planted it on me. It was vital that I do my utmost to ascertain who had installed it. If I didn't, he, or whoever he was working for, would try and try again to kill me. And sooner or later I'd end up on the marble slab. No doubt about it, I *had* to find out who'd rigged up that booby-trap.

But first of all I had to find the devilish thing itself. It could

be anywhere in the room. Absolutely anywhere. My eyes conducted a second exploratory tour while I stood there at the door. They saw nothing suspicious so I lifted my left foot to move into the room. It remained poised in mid-air before I hastily withdrew it. The carpet! I'd nearly stood on it before examining the thing. Two thin wires underneath a carpet, connected to the explosive. The weight of a foot on the pile causes the naked parts to make contact and . . . I felt faint. I knelt down and carefully — so very carefully — lifted the edge of the carpet. Then I had to grin, despite myself. The dust that arose proved just exactly how long ago it was since that car-



pet had been lifted, or adjusted, or moved in any way. So the carpet was definitely OK.

Next I moved to the small chest of drawers just to the left of the door. A booby-merchant's delight, a chest of drawers — you can enjoy so many variations. You can have them closed and make your connections so that when the victim opens one up he goes. Or you can leave one half-open so that when he shuts it the same thing happens. Or you can leave two just slightly open. He closes one, nothing happens — he closes the second and in doing so closes the contacts. And so on.

But the chest of drawers was safe. So, moving to the right, I began to examine my book-case.

Not a very likely place — the potential victim might go months without reading a book — but nevertheless it was essential to check it. I found it to be untouched.

On to the wash-hand basin. You'd easily spot any wires connected to the taps: I spotted none.

Halfway round the room by now, at the small recess which contained my bed. A careful and minute examination revealed nothing which might disturb my rest.

Then the small table at the window. As I was turning toward it I suddenly froze. I found that my throat had gone dry. For a full 30 seconds I stood there staring. Then I began cursing softly to

myself. What a fool! What a stupid panic-stricken fool! I almost deserved to get what had been laid on for me. For that phone on the table before me was the very very first thing I should have examined.

A phone is an admirable instrument for the rigging up of a lethal booby-trap. Almost made to measure. A simple connection with wires to the explosive and that's that. The phone itself supplies the current to detonate the charge. However, it's not very clever to fix it so that the moment the phone rings the charge goes off — the victim may not be anywhere near the thing when his number is dialled.

(Continued on page 52)



BANDITS in BIKINIS

FACT • DON SALVER

A young American soldier led a villa-full of seductive, bikini-clad water sprites on an old-fashioned gangland-style raid against Germany's tank forces in Italy.

IT ended with 820 dead Nazis and a great Allied victory, but it started with an argument.

"You're the only one who can do it," Lieutenant Colonel A. F. Dunwoody of the OSS repeated firmly as he struggled to control his temper.

"Go to Hell . . . sir," Pfc Louis

Santangelo replied without a moment's hesitation.

Dunwoody winced, mopped his sopping face and glanced across the oven-like office to USAF Maj Harold Larsen.

"Privates don't speak that way to officers in this man's army," Larsen snapped angrily.

"You can go to Hell, too, Major," said the GI.

"Are you psycho? We can send you to Leavenworth for this," Larsen threatened.

"To Leavenworth? Sure — but not to play with the Mafia butchers of Licata!" Santangelo countered.

The time — the blazing hot morning of June 23, 1943.

The place — OSS hq in Bizerte, Tunisia.

The men — two perspiring intelligence officers and an icily furious GI.

The mission — Operation Harpoon, one of the most bizarre, most violent and most important spy and commando actions of World War II. Startling even to the "unconventional warfare" pros of Major General "Wild Bill" Donovan's daring free-wheeling OSS, Harpoon was so peculiar and unlikely that not one of the Allied military personnel involved liked it at all. The problem was how to knock out 110 German Tiger tanks concealed in an underground depot only three miles from the Licata beaches where General George Patton's troops were to blast their



way ashore on the southern coast of Sicily. It was the proposed solution that — from the very beginning — bred arguments and outbursts on an unprecedented scale. "Obscene," "ridiculous" and "utterly unfeasible" were some of the more charitable comments made to OSS brain-truster Dunwoody when he first submitted the plan to the Joint Anglo-American Strategy Group on the eve of the Allied invasion of Sicily. "Sheer suicide — and dirty!" was the more indignant judgment of one irate US general.

All this was true. Operation Harpoon was more preposterous than a "C" movie and more risky than playing poker with strangers, but neither of those were the reasons why Pfc Santangelo behaved so stubbornly when he first learned what big, balding Dunwoody and the crew-cut Air Force photo intelligence major wanted him to do. The 22-year-old private was not afraid — he was enraged.

"You're asking me to play footsie with gangsters and murderers!" he accused bitterly. "I left all that Mafia filth behind when I

pulled out of Illinois, and there's no power on earth can make me volunteer for that kind of a deal. Use your fancy bombers to clobber the cave."

"No good," Dunwoody confessed gloomily. "The roof is 80 feet of solid rock, and the Liberators and 17s couldn't find it anyway because the camouflage is so good. *Someone* has to go in and you're elected."

"Nothing personal," Major Larsen added hastily, "but with your rather *unusual* family connections —"

The tall thin young soldier swore an ugly and ancient Sicilian oath, a curse that surprised him as much as it disturbed the two officers, for he thought that he'd forgotten it long ago. Lou Santangelo was a radio operator-gunner on a Sherman medium tank attached to the Third Armored, but he had not been chosen for this vital mission because of his military skills. He was the youngest son of one of the most notorious Mafia chieftains in the American midwest, a ruthless millionaire who had stilettoed, bombed and tommy-gunned his way to a

fortune over a heap of corpses. Although the lean GI had broken relations with his father four years earlier and moved away to California, it was this link with the Mafia that made him so special.

"No Allied team could reach that cave alone," the OSS officer pointed out realistically, "and only your Uncle Rocco can mobilise the so-called Brotherhood in the Licata region to help us."

"You've been reading too many comic books, colonel. He may be the boss there, but I've never even met him," the tanker replied.

"You're of his blood, and you're the son of a Mafia 'Don'. That should be plenty for any Sicilian who calls himself a Mafioso," Dunwoody explained patiently. As a former narcotics cop, the 41-year-old OSS agent knew a great deal about the mysterious international crime syndicate — but he was shrewd enough to realise that any mention of this would only make the moral young GI even more hostile.

There was a long silence.

Suddenly, Larsen broke the stalemate with shock tactics.

"Let's stop kidding around. I'm



"Meals? I thought you said three males a day!"

giving it to you straight," he told Santangelo. "We don't give a damn about how many people your old man killed, but we know that you will be murdering hundreds — maybe thousands — of your own buddies if you don't volunteer. Your division is slated to land the first waves at Licata."

The Pfc sighed as he realized that he had no choice.

"Okay. Okay. I hate your guts . . . sir . . . but I volunteer for Operation Harpoon," he surrendered.

That afternoon, Pfc Santangelo was introduced to the smiling, soft-spoken British explosives expert who was to be his partner. Lieutenant William Cedric Dixon was a veteran "sapper" with an excellent sense of humor and an outstanding record of demolitions. Blond, Oxford-educated and urbane, Dixon was an ex-playboy who really enjoyed his work.

"Should be a good show," he predicted nonchalantly as the four men went over the aerial photos and the sand-box model of the coastal cliffs west of the port of Licata.

"With more than 9000 German troops from the 17th Panzers all over the area? You must be out of your head," Lou Santangelo answered curtly.

"Piece of cake," the Englishman reassured them, "especially if the private obeys my orders."

Lt. Colonel Dunwoody cleared his throat noisily and lit another cigar.

"Ah . . . well, that's not exactly the setup," he announced. "For special reasons that must be obvious, you'll have to follow his orders. He's in command."

"So help me," gasped the startled British officer, who had never heard of a 22-year-old Pfc telling a lieutenant what to do.

"I don't like it any more than you do," the young GI declared.

Then they looked at each other, shrugged at the insanity of it all and shook hands. By this time, Lou Santangelo was convinced that the entire mission was unrealistic and he didn't care. He

wanted to get it over with as soon as possible.

By the time they boarded the Royal Navy submarine at 7.00 pm on the moonless night of the 27th, Santangelo and the good-humored Englishman were on first name terms. Dixon had the poise that a lifetime of wealth brings, plus the confidence that came from four previous sabotage jobs behind enemy lines. As the undersea raider cruised north through the mine-fields and headed toward Sicily, Dixon slept easily with his head resting on the waterproof sack that concealed his 55 pounds of plastic explosives. Lou Santangelo listened to him snore, and the young American couldn't help but smile. "Willie" Dixon seemed like a sophisticated or silly fool, but it was clear that he had the guts of a 20th century Scarlet Pimpernel. The gangster's son had proved his own courage in a dozen tank battles from Kasserine Gap to the capture of Tunis, but he was still uneasy about the weird project that OSS had code-named Operation Harpoon. Troubled by the awareness that he was a combat soldier with no cloak-and-dagger experience, he barely dozed.

At 2.50 am the submarine poked up its periscope cautiously and the moustachioed skipper peered toward the Sicilian shore for some landmark.

After considerable study of the charts and recon photos, the naval officer concluded that they were about four miles from the rendezvous cove where the Underground agents were to meet them. Santangelo and the demolitions expert checked their gear as the undersea craft glided further west at a cautious five knots, and they barely had time to gulp down mugs



of hot tea laced with rum before a pink-cheeked ensign told them to mount to the conning tower.

It was nearly 4.00 am when the submarine slowly rose to the surface and a dozen sneaker-shod sailors scampered quietly up the ladder to man the deck guns. Santangelo and the Royal Navy skipper followed a few moments later, studied the rocky coast thoughtfully and waited for the light signal that OSS had promised would appear. Nothing happened, and the tense young American began to sweat.

The lean US armor veteran saw it. Four dots . . . two dashes . . . three dots . . . one dash. He tapped the naval officer on the arm as it was repeated, and the skipper raised his own blinker to flash back the prearranged counter-sign. A few minutes later, the two Allied agents were loading their sacks into an inflated life raft tethered to the submarine. The sea was calm but the night was hot, and they were damp with perspiration by the time they cut the lines and began paddling the quarter mile to shore.

Before they covered 100 yards, Lou Santangelo heard a gurgling splashing noise behind him and turned around swiftly. The under-sea raider had submerged. The two spy-commandos were alone on the blue-black surface of the ancient Mediterranean.

They stared futilely into the darkness of the cove, but could detect no movement. The American unbuttoned his jacket, loosened the special silencer .22 in his shoulder holster and wondered why he had ever left his solid steel-hulled tank. "Get ready," Dixon warned softly as the breakers spun the rubberised raft, and then their flimsy craft crunched on the sand of the beach.

Moving exactly as they had rehearsed, the two men jumped out and swiftly dragged the float up out of the water. Santangelo grabbed the rapid-firing Bren gun his partner handed him, sprinted 30 yards inland and took up a covering position behind two small boulders. The English demolitions pro began to move the sacks away from the water, crouching low to offer the minimum silhouette to any enemy marksmen. It was all going smoothly, but there was still no sign of the Underground contact named "Pietro" who was supposed to meet them.

Suddenly, Santangelo smelled a strong provocative scent, erotic, feminine, pure woman. He spun around instantly with his finger on the trigger of his sub-machine-gun.

There she was.

Five feet away.

Slim and young and lovely.

Barefooted.

Smiling, with a .32 calibre Beretta automatic in her left hand and a flashlight in her right.

Not quite naked, but close enough to it in a handkerchief-sized bikini.

"Pittsburgh," she said in the musical voice of a teen-age girl.



"Would you mind pulling the shade down? How much do you think a guy can take?"

"Cleveland," he responded mechanically with the recognition signal although he couldn't quite believe what he was seeing.

He stared at her unclad beauty for a long moment — until she laughed.

"Pietro?" he asked incredulously.

"Si, but you may call me Angela, Signor," she replied in barely accented English.

Santangelo nodded to himself. It figured. Operation Harpoon—unlikely from the beginning. Getting crazier every second. It was going to become a lot stranger before it was over. He sniffed her costly perfume again, swallowed hard and waved back toward his partner. The Briton scuttled up from the shore quickly, took one comprehensive glance that surveyed every inch of her exquisite anatomy and grinned in friendly approval.

"Won't you introduce me to your uncle?" Willie Dixon asked nonchalantly.

"This . . . this . . . is Pietro!"

the earnest young GI exploded.

"You Yanks certainly know how to fight a war, sir," the sapper lieutenant countered with a mocking salute.

"This is not the time or place to talk, signori," the Sicilian girl interrupted. "Collect your gear and follow me at once. Come quickly, for these beaches are patrolled by Tedeschi soldiers with dogs."

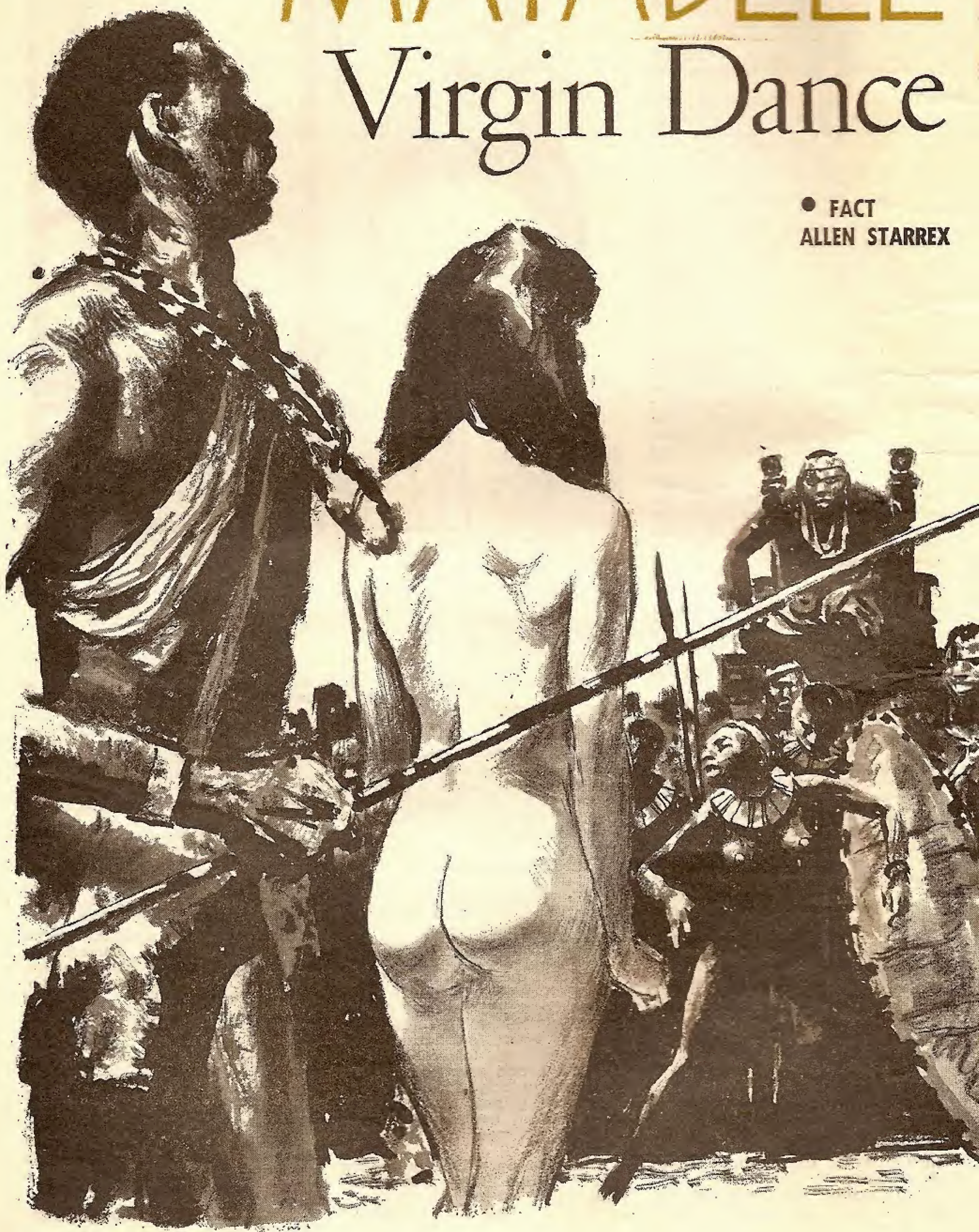
Her mention of German troops terminated the conversation abruptly. The two Allied operatives deflated and concealed the raft, picked up their gear and obediently trailed after her to the path at the bottom of the cliff. Shapely Angela led the way up the narrow twisting route, and her swaying stride was so fascinating that Lou Santangelo had to force himself to concentrate on the hazards facing Operation Harpoon. Without warning, those abstract dangers became an urgent reality as the Sicilian beauty turned a corner in the trail and gasped.

(Continued on page 38)

MATABELE

Virgin Dance

● FACT
ALLEN STARREX



Kurt and Eyvette von Brandt were the only outsiders ever to watch the pagan orgy of the Matabele virgin dancers to celebrate King Lobengula's "diamond" ritual.

THE staccato crack of the 20 drums split the humid African night air with the splattering bark of a hundred handguns exploding in precision-timed sequence.

With every slap of a drummer's hand on the drumhead there also came the rhythm of a warrior chant and the jangle of trinket belts slapping against an undulating bamboo-tailed kilt of a white-plumed soldier of the stalwart Matabele — the toughest fighter in Africa. The Matabeles were led by the canniest ruler, black or white, ever to live in the deep bush country of the Dark Continent.

To the trained eye of the blond, fair-skinned man who stood to one side of the whirling, dancing, chanting natives the scene unfolded as a terrifying, raging spectacle of the raw, alien culture of Africa. But the man wasn't looking at the drums or the

dance — he stared at something else.

Across the stockade stood a crude but strong cage, about 3 ft by 7 ft in diameter. Its sturdy bamboo bars were secured by heavy strips of antelope hide. Inside the cage was a dark-haired, fair-skinned young woman. Her long black hair, which was usually neatly tied back in a bun, now hung down the sides of her face, spread itself across her smooth shoulders and draped itself as natural cover over her firm bosom.

Like the blond man across the stockade, the girl's eyes were rivetted on a single object. But, unlike him, she gazed at the far end of the huge, oblong structure. There blazed a row of six torches, flickering their firebeams down on as fantastic a scene as ever witnessed by white man — or woman. On a beautifully carved chair of ebony sat a huge, strangely clad man. On his head was a crown of leopard skin. The upper half of his body was naked, except for a dazzling necklace which wound around his massive throat and fell in two strands down his chest.

His thighs were covered by the traditional bamboo-tail kilt, which was the trademark of the Matabele. He sat in the great ebony chair in regal splendor. In his right hand was a large pewter mug, from which he sipped. His eyes lazily took in the entire spectacle before him. Then, as always, he turned his attention to some-

thing going on at the foot of the throne stage.

To the wild tempo of the drums and the dancing, chanting warriors of the Matabele, writhed the finest specimens of the tribe's womanhood. They were the choice of the lot, the firm and youthful virgins whose beauty had given them great honor in this primitive society. They had been chosen as future wives of the greatest Matabele of them all, the omnipotent Lobengula, King-Emperor of the Matabele and the most powerful potentate in all of Africa. He was considered by European powers as the last stumbling-block to complete white conquest of the continent.

As Lobengula peered down from his ebony throne, the young girls swayed to the savage beat of the drums, thighs flexing, bosoms glistening in the torchlight. This was the scene the girl in the cage was watching.

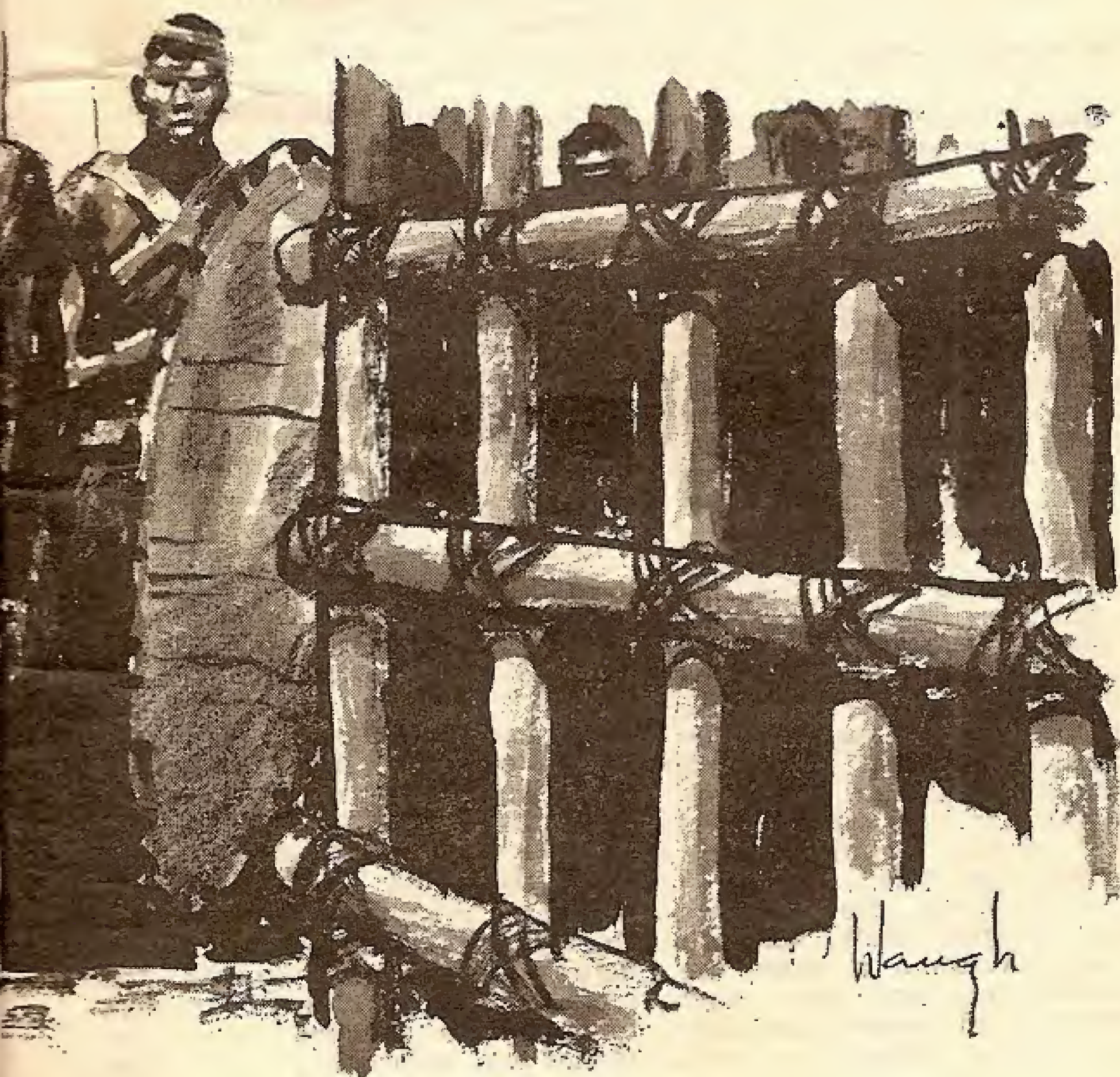
As the tempo of the drums increased, so did the movement of the virgins at Lobengula's feet. In the cage, the girl's face contorted. Her lips peeled back sharply, and she felt strange sensations flicking through her own body. She was torn by the blood of two continents, which at that moment were fighting a raging war within her. Her Christian name was Eyvette Breaux. Her father had been a French soldier-adventurer who came to Africa for conquest and himself was conquered by a Zulu beauty. Breaux, a man of honor as well as strength, defied the law of the white man and took a Zulu wife. Eyvette was the result.

Raised in a French school in the Congo, she was trained as a white and treated as one because her father was a powerful man. At the age of 19 she married the blond man across the stockade. His name was Kurt von Brandt, and he was a Swiss-German engineer-explorer who had offered his services to an English genius named Cecil Rhodes. It was this service which had brought Eyvette and Kurt to this dangerous and terrible night.

Across the stockade Kurt suddenly uttered an oath in German and, with every muscle in his body, tried to move toward the cage. The effort failed, for Kurt was bound securely hand and foot to a 5-foot stake. The two Matabele warriors who stood on either side of the young engineer paid little attention to his efforts. They knew he couldn't get away, and they continued to watch the dance, which now was reaching a climax.

The Matabele warriors were forming ranks in the centre of the stockade. They moved with rapid, rhythmic steps into lines 10 abreast, their song now reaching heroic proportions.

They were moving to the cad-





"I wish you'd stop that screaming, I'm trying to sleep!"

ence of the drums toward the throne area. To the right of the throne, on a raised platform covered with a hemp mat, sat the Matabele generals and wise men of the tribe. They were surrounded by a bevy of lovely girls who poured *tishiwala*, a potent rice beer, into pewter mugs similar to the one used by Lobengula himself. The mugs were emptied almost at once after every fill.

The signal was given. Lobengula's male secretary, who was dressed in a Western-style white cotton suit, snapped an order, and the *piece de resistance* of the evening's revelry was about to begin.

Lobengula rose shakily from his ebony throne. Two of the king's *imbese* (royal guard) stepped forward to support the giant ruler. He threw them off and, walking like a man on a tightrope, stepped over a living carpet of the prostrated bodies of the young virgins onto a second raised platform. The only piece of furniture on the platform was a beautiful leopard-skin couch.

The famed Matabele ritual of the diamonds was underway.

The drums changed tempo into a throbbing, steady roar as the dancers began a heavy, lurching sidestep. Even the chant changed into a basso-pitched hum. Another order came from the secretary. Two warriors raced across the stockade straight for the cage. Kurt was yelling now, but he couldn't be heard above the din. He writhed under the pressure of the bonds, but he couldn't shake them off. His eyes were glazed with fear and hate, and he struggled against unbeatable odds. He was trapped. But he kept his glazed eyes on his wife in the cage across the arena.

The two warriors had reached the cage now, and quickly untied the thongs holding the bars. The girl stepped back almost to the rear of the cage, but she didn't cower. She stood straight, her back arched and her eyes wide as the warriors' nimble hands opened the barred cage door.

The cage open, the warriors suddenly stepped back, one on either side. Without a word the girl stepped between them, and the three moved toward the platform on which King Lobengula

lay stretched on his leopard couch. The girl walked swiftly, the roaring drums matching her steps. The two Matabele warriors kept pace, but dropped slightly behind her.

As she reached the platform, she turned, and for a moment she looked straight at her husband tied to the stake. Her face was a mask.

Kurt screamed again, but the drums drowned out the cry.

As the girl turned back to the platform, two of the young Matabele virgins quickly spread a second leopard skin next to, but slightly below, the one occupied by the king.

The girl, her black hair shining and her white body glistening with perspiration, stepped forward and lay full-length on the leopard skin. As she did so, the Matabele virgins stepped forward. Both the king and the white woman were anointed with a perfume prepared from sandalwood and oil.

Now a dozen members of the royal guard began unlocking a battery of ancient iron safes which lined the back wall of the royal chamber. As the heavy doors creaked open on their rusty hinges, thousands of glittering, uncut blue-white diamonds spilled into waiting sacks. From other safes, additional thousands of British sovereigns came pouring out.

As a guard filled his goatskin sack, he would race to the platform. There he poured the jewels and gold coins in heaps over the reclining monarch; others did the same to the white girl at his side. Within minutes both were virtually buried beneath the treasure.

Only the rise and fall of their breathing indicated they were alive. High above the din was a new chant, this one from the platform filled with generals and wise men. They chanted the king's virtues and extolled his unmatched wealth.

The drums pounded savagely, so wildly that any cadence was lost. There was nothing but a massive boom of hands on drumheads and the screams of the chant. Two torch bearers moved forward and placed their blazing lights at each end of the platform. The piles of diamonds and gold shot glittering sparks across the stockade.

The larger pile on the couch suddenly erupted. The king burst through his "diamond grave" and stood on the couch, the diamonds and gold still covering him up to his knees. As he spread his arms to the heavens, the drums rolled out one last resounding boom and the warriors screamed a final tribute. Lobengula the magnificent, Lobengula the undefeated, was in his glory.

The big monarch stepped across the glittering pile and probed beneath the one covering the white woman. Slowly, almost tenderly, he scooped away the stones and helped her to her feet,

just as the drums and the chant abruptly ended. As the two stood quietly in the torchlight, only the sobs of Kurt, tied to the stake, could be heard in the compound.

Lobengula bowed to the woman. She returned the courtesy. The king uttered a command and the girl was led away. But not to the cage she had occupied before. She went instead to a thatch-covered house at the far end of the compound. There, a woman slave bathed her and left her to sleep on a couch of fur.

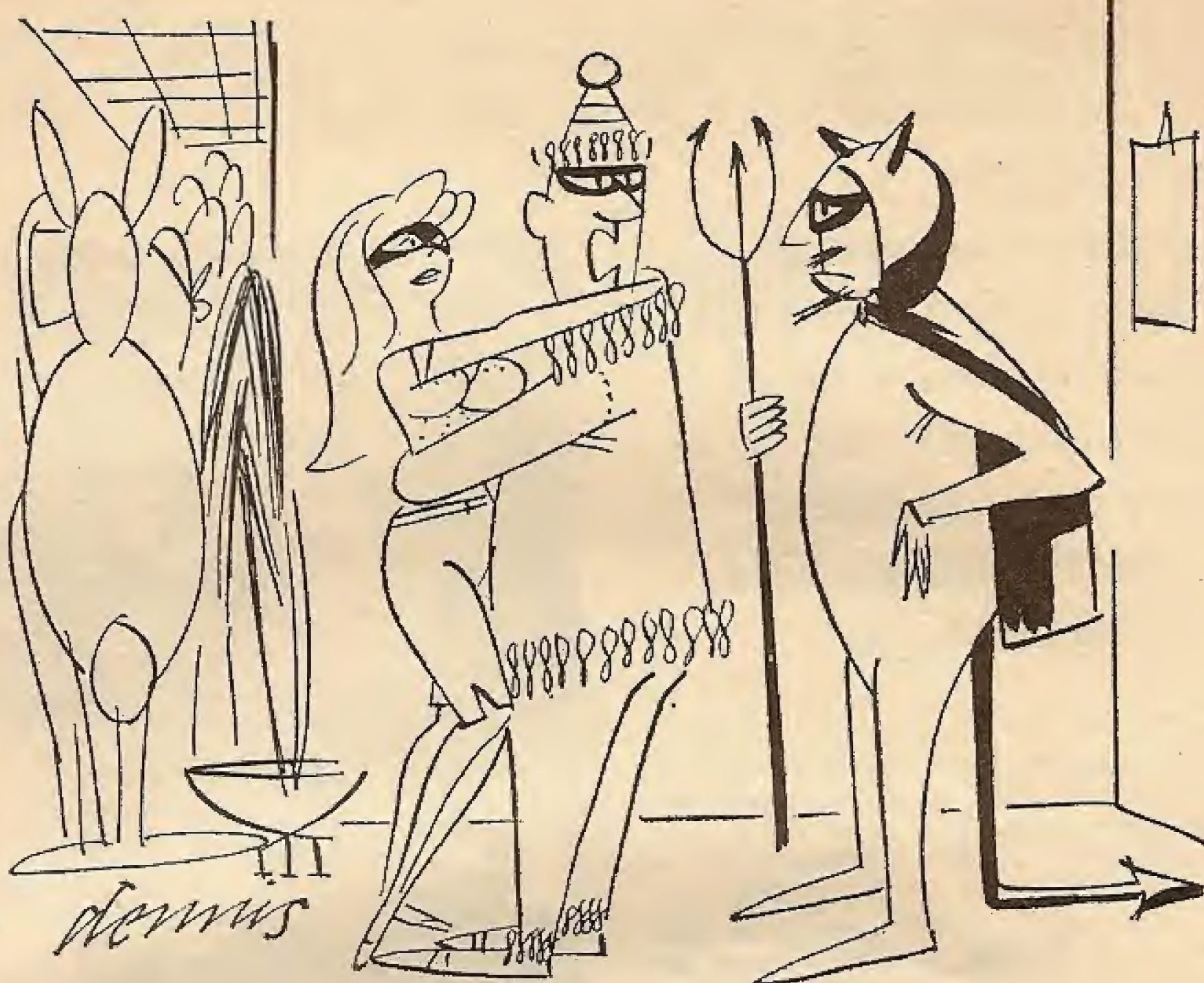
Back in the centre of the stockade, the two Matabele warriors guarding Kurt cut him loose from the stake and led him quietly to the hut occupied by his wife. The man looked down at the girl sleeping peacefully on the fur pallet. She breathed evenly, deeply. There was a smile on her face.

Kurt wept openly as he dropped beside her. And then, strangely, he too slept.

Kurt and Eyvette von Brandt had participated in the most fantastic pagan ceremony ever carried out in Africa. It was so strange, so horrifying in its implications, that neither could fully comprehend. Only Eyvette's Zulu blood had answered its call.

They had come as emissaries, bearing gifts of gold from Cecil Rhodes. Lobengula had promised that no harm would come to them.

They had left the headquarters of Rhodes' great Kimberley mines to travel deep into the Matabele bush. They had been scarcely out of the site when the Matabeles produced the cage. The natives had fallen on von Brandt, stripped and bound him. Eyvette had



"Go to hell!"

been placed in the cage.

They had entered Lobengula's capital city as prisoners, expecting the worst. Now, after the strange and terrible night of the diamond ritual, they slept an exhausted sleep.

Lobengula also slept, surrounded by his wives and slaves. He was undisputed king of a great domain. And he was still the bul-

wark of African independence. Lobengula's fame was so great, in fact, that Britain's Queen Victoria corresponded with him and sent him an autographed picture of herself on one occasion and an ornate chair on another.

A man of massive frame, Lobengula was also a fearless fighter and a stern monarch. To symbolise his authority and enforce discipline among his subjects, he frequently resorted to mass purges of the Nazi sort, despatching recalcitrant tribesmen with the royal assegai, the symbol of sovereignty. Although he was considered only semi-civilised, Lobengula displayed a marked capacity for governing his people and possessed a shrewd political skill in dealing with whites.

Lobengula secretly distrusted the whites, but he allowed them to come into his country and treated them in a friendly fashion as long as they obeyed his laws and respected his sovereignty. The Matabele king had a great respect for Cecil Rhodes, who appeared to be less ruthless than other invaders of Africa.

But more than anything else, Lobengula was interested in Rhodes' diamond mines at Kimberley, the world's richest diamond fields, discovered the year Lobengula was made king.

Lobengula's method of obtaining a large share of these diamonds, his weird "diamond rites", and the accumulation of wealth beyond that of any other ruler in Africa at the time, all make for a fascinating story, and one familiar to nearly every South African schoolboy.

(Continued on page 50)



"You did call at an awkward time. I was just about to give baby a bottle!"

"HE'S TOO GOOD -

So said a heavyweight fighter some 35 years ago when he received a hard right to the jaw. And this is only one of the many comical incidents related around the ringside . . .

IT was the most terrible fight on record, this fight between two legless men. The idea of it was revolting — the outcome of it was diabolical.

The fight took place in Melbourne in the 90's and was the brain-child of a publican named Stemple, an Englishman who came to Australia, made his fortune with sheep, set himself up in a hotel and indulged in his passion of boxing. His participation in the sport took the form of backing his fancies. He made quite a bit of money backing Bill Farnan who became the first heavyweight glove champion of Australia by knocking out Peter Jackson in three rounds. But Stemple lost a lot of money in repeatedly backing Starlight, a popular fighter who fought everybody and beat practically nobody.

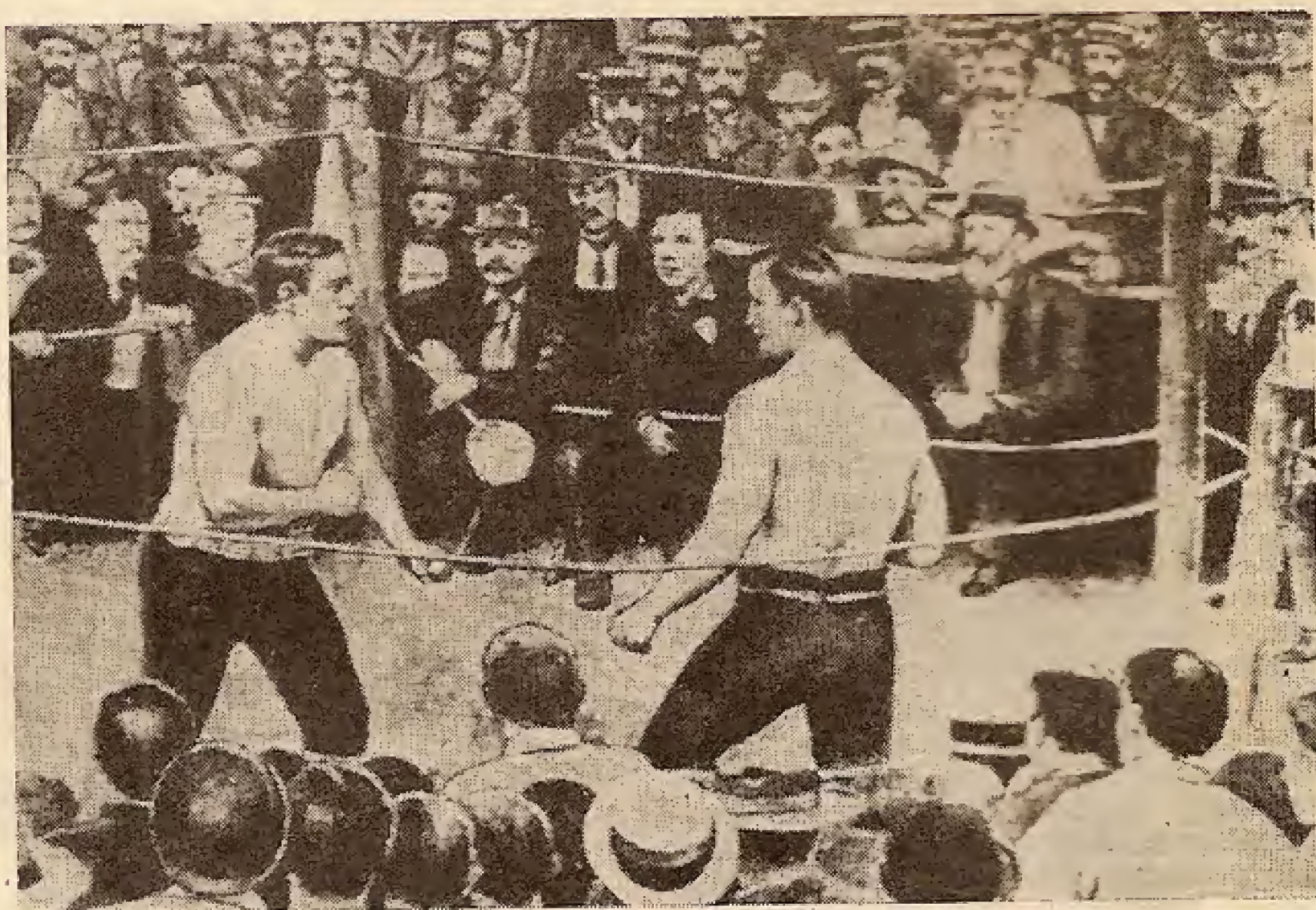
A customer at Stemple's pub was a man named Jack Stakly who prided himself as a ball-puncher. Stakly had a deep chest, broad shoulders and remarkable agility — considering he had no legs from the knees down!

He had lost his legs in an accident — a rockfall had crushed his pins — and had leather caps fitted to the stumps. He was described as a "sadly abbreviated man".

There arrived in town a Jamaican negro named Sambo who had been run over in New York by a tram, the accident causing him to lose his legs below the knees. Sambo was a beggar who did shoe-shining when he could and lived on the generosity of others when business was slack. He arrived in Melbourne on a tramp steamer.

Stemple heard of him and the idea of a boxing match between Sambo and Stakly immediately appealed to the bizarre side of his nature. Quickly and quietly the match was arranged — quickly, in case Sambo left these shores — quietly, because the contest would not have been allowed by law.

A ring was pitched in a barn at the rear of Stemple's hotel. A crowd of 20 attended to witness the bout.



An artist's impression of the fight between John L. Sullivan and Jake Kilrain, which took place on July 8, 1889. The last of the bare knuckle heavyweight championships, Sullivan won by KO in the 75th round.

The men, stripped to the waist, with white trunks extending to the leather caps of their stumps and streamers about their waists, presented a strange, abhorrent, yet fascinating picture. Both were broad but so short.

The referee was the editor of a local newspaper. The fight was to be conducted under Queensberry Rules. Each wore two-ounce gloves.

From the start it could be seen that Stakly was by far the more scientific, but the negro seemed to have more strength and ferocity. For the first two minutes of the first round Sambo stood on uncertain supports, swinging both hands. Stakly withstood the onslaught, parrying the blows and occasionally scoring with counter punches.

A right to the nose dropped Sambo flat on his back. He sat up immediately and placing his gloved hand on the floor, swung his body clear and dropped onto his stumps.

The second, third, fourth and fifth rounds were savagely contested, with knockdowns frequent and points about even. In the sixth session Stakly drove a left to Sambo's mouth, knocking out several teeth and bouncing the black man onto one of the ring posts.

As Sambo bounced back off the post, Stakly uppercut him, breaking his jaw. Sambo went down but bounced up in a rage. Crazed, he scrambled toward his opponent on hands and stumps. The referee called to him, "That's foul fighting!" But Sambo ignored him. As he came up to Stakly, he grappled

with him, then deliberately pressed his right thumb into Stakly's left eye, gouging it almost out.

In agony, Stakly let out a scream, fastened his teeth into Sambo's neck and bit deeply and tore out a piece of flesh. The negro's blood spurted across the ring. The referee, seconds and spectators hopped into the ring and dragged the cripples apart.

Fortunately, there was a doctor in the audience. His prompt action saved Sambo from bleeding to death. But Stakly's eye could not be saved.

It took all Stemple's influence to keep the bout a secret. Both boxers were kept in seclusion for several weeks until their wounds healed. Sambo was given a few pounds and shipped to New Zealand. Stakly was "handsomely provided for by Stemple and a few other rich men who attended the gruesome spectacle".

Boxing history is studded with unusual fights and unusual incidents, though fortunately there is no record of any duplication of the Stakly-Sambo battle. But October 4, 1923 is a date that Mike McTigue always remembered. Mike was an Irishman who won the world light-heavyweight title from the hated Senegalese Battling Siki.

Poor, illiterate Siki defended his title against McTigue in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day, 1923! Reports leaving Dublin said that McTigue won a clear points decision and possibly he did, but Siki did receive warnings prior to the fight.

Running up a phenomenal re-

I QUIT!"

SPORT • RAY MITCHELL



Jack Dempsey, the giant-killer of Toledo, in the glamor-garb of his generation — black derby and fur-collar coat.

cord in Georgia was a young man named Young Stribling, who, at the time of McTigue's coronation, was a light-heavyweight. A syndicate of men in Columbus, Georgia, wanted to give Stribling his chance at the world title, so Major Paul Jones, a member of the syndicate, went to New York to get McTigue's signature on a contract.

McTigue's manager, Joe Jacobs, was a shrewd man with a dollar. He also was a cautious soul. He examined the offer made to McTigue, made some counter offers regarding money and referee, then accepted the fight.

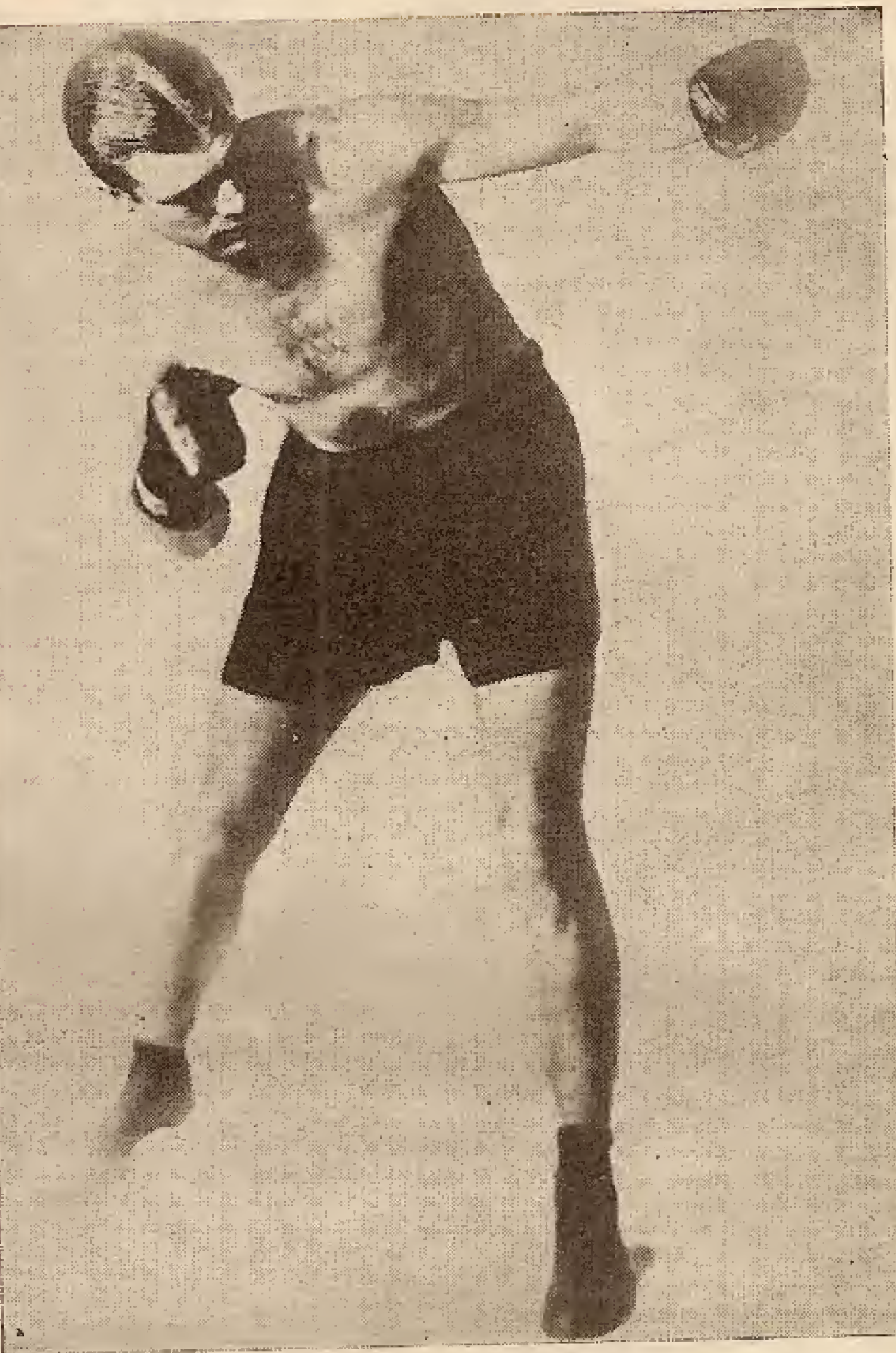
Jones agreed to the terms, one of which was that Jacobs take his own referee, a custom in those days.

The party arrived in Columbus a few days before the bout but McTigue injured his hand and asked for a postponement. Jones said he would send a doctor to McTigue's room to examine the hand and if the doc said there was need for a postponement, such postponement would be granted.

Late that afternoon, seven men entered McTigue's room. All claimed to be doctors. All examined the hand. All pronounced it OK. McTigue protested. He was told to look out of the window.

Puzzled, the champion did so. Outside he saw a tree with a rope over a bough — at the end of the rope was a noose. A few men stood around and nodded at the tree.

McTigue was annoyed, more than afraid. He ordered the men out of the room and said if they did not grant a postponement,



Light-heavyweight Young Stribling was awarded the fight against Mike McTigue in Georgia on October 4, 1923, when the Klu Klux Klan changed the decision against McTigue.

there would not be a fight.

Soon afterwards McTigue heard noises outside. He looked out and saw men carrying placards, which read: "Fight, or flight. No fight and you leave Columbus in a box."

Savagely, McTigue said he would fight, providing a doctor gave him a needle to deaden the pain. This was done.

It was not a particularly good fight and at the end of the bout the referee, Harry Ertle, looked to Joe Jacobs for instructions. Jacobs waved his hands across his body, signalling a draw, a verdict which would keep McTigue's title for him and save a riot. Ertle awarded a draw but the verdict did not save a riot. Klu Klux Klan members moved menacingly toward the ring and Major Jones hastily changed the verdict to a win for Stribling. The crowd cheered their "champion." Ertle, McTigue and Jacobs left Columbus as fast as possible.

Once out of town, Ertle cabled New York newspapers that McTigue and Stribling had boxed a draw. That was the official verdict and that is how it appears in the record books.

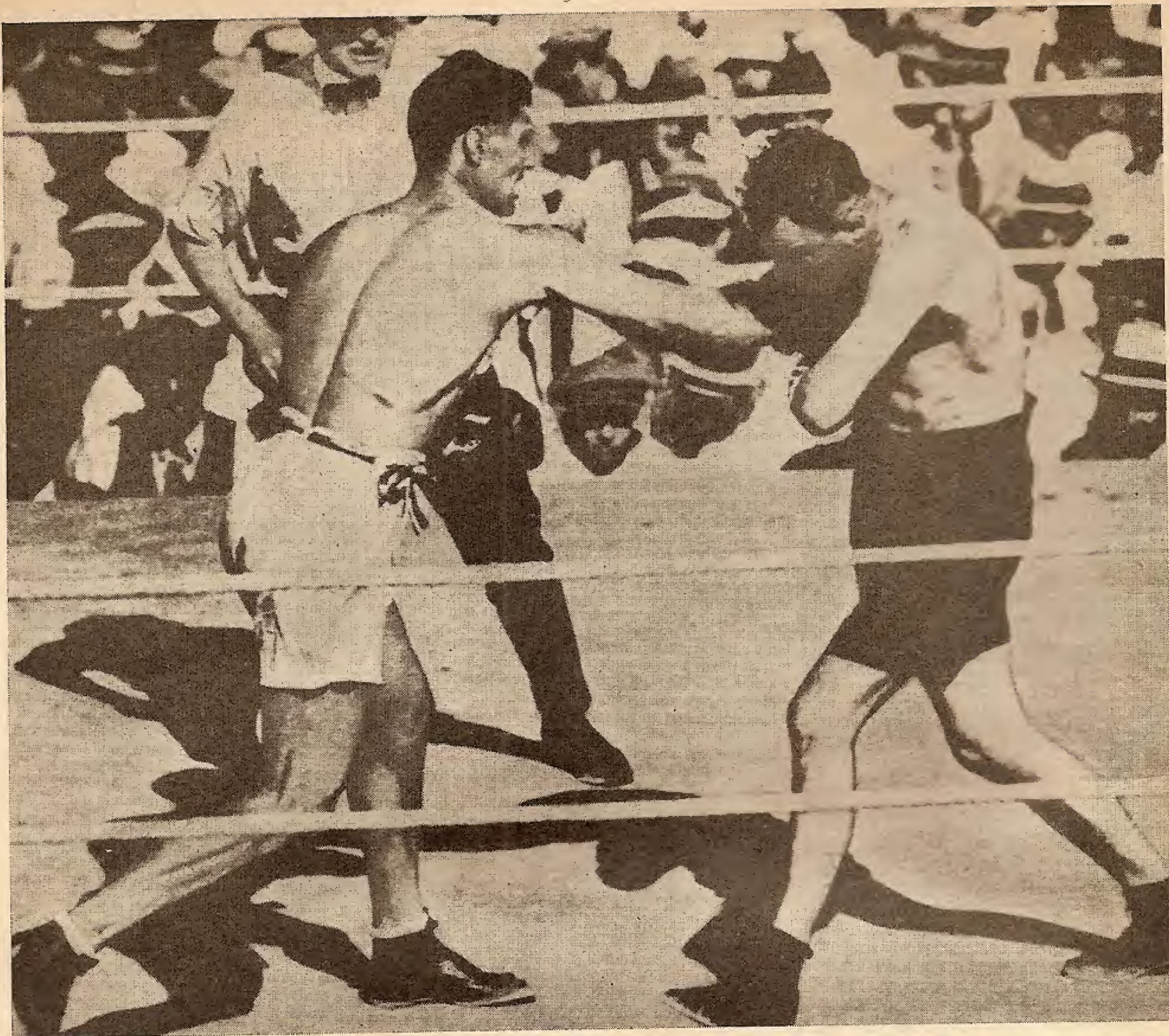
Another out-of-town fight featuring a world champion brought repercussions which will live longer than McTigue's clash with the KKK. That was the bout between Jack Dempsey and Tommy Gibbons at a small town named Shelby, in Montana, on American Independence Day, 1923. Shelby tried to show its independence that day but it was not of age.

Sam Sampson was the man who had the brainwave to match Dempsey in a world title fight at Shelby. Sam had his hour of glory — and he had a lifetime of regret.

Sam was a storekeeper in Shelby, a town with 500 inhabitants. He thought Shelby had a future and he thought the best way to make people conscious of the existence of the town was to promote a world heavyweight title fight.

Sam put Shelby on the map, all right. It became as well known as Chicago or New York. But...

The townspeople of Shelby called a meeting. Everyone was keen on the idea and in eight days a sum of \$22,000 (Australian) was raised. Then the Mayor asked Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, what money he wanted for



The fight that broke the banks at Shelby, Montana, on Independence Day (July 4), 1923. Jack Dempsey (left) outpointed Tommy Gibbons over 15 rounds.

Dempsey to defend his title against Tommy Gibbons, a leading contender. Kearns wanted £60,000 — and refused to bargain. Gibbons said he would accept 50 percent of the gate after Dempsey was paid.

In three weeks an arena was built. It was big enough to hold 40,000 persons. Then Kearns demanded his £60,000 in advance. The demand panicked Shelby and portion of the money was offered to Kearns.

Kearns accepted the portion of the guarantee on the provision that the whole promotion was handed to him and his friend Dan McKettrick. Shelby had to agree.

Came the night of the fight. The box office held £38,000. This sum, plus the £22,000 already given to Kearns represented Dempsey's guarantee. The crowd was smaller than anticipated.

The fight was not spectacular. Dempsey won on points — the only time in his career that he fought as many as 15 rounds in one fight.

The citizens of Shelby were faced with an unpaid-for arena and no return from the fight — Dempsey and his party had the lot.

Gibbons gained nothing but experience. Dempsey, Kearns and McKettrick slept the night in a basement beneath a shop — with an armed guard on the door. At dawn next day the trio, accompanied by the sheriff and his deputies, went to the railway station where the visitors hired a one-carriage train to take them out of Shelby.

Shelby was not lucky enough to get just nothing out of the fight. The citizens were in hock up to their eyebrows. The town's three banks went broke. The town never regained its small prosperity.

Yes, Shelby was put on the map — and off it. But it did become well known!

From one of the greatest of heavyweight champions to one of the greatest flyweight champions is a big hop in weight, but the flyweight champion in question — Jimmy Wilde — also figured in a

fight where his opponent received no money. That fight took place in England on January 13, 1921. His opponent was Pete Herman.

Two Americans conceived the idea of matching Wilde, the Welsh wizard who held the world flyweight title (weight limit eight stone) with American Herman who held the world bantamweight title (weight limit eight stone six). The Yanks knew that such a bout held in England would draw a full house at big prices. So they hired the Royal Albert Hall, London, and guaranteed each fighter £8000 — with Herman's bantam title at stake.

Wilde — cautious soul — insisted that his £8000 be deposited in his bank account. He signed his contract after the money matter was settled. Herman also was a cautious soul — but in another way. He defended his title against fellow American Joe Lynch on December 22, 1920 — three weeks before the scheduled Wilde fight.

Herman lost his title to Lynch — or did he just loan it until after his return from England? Because after the Wilde bout Herman returned to America and beat Lynch for the title!

Of course, there was quite a

row when Lynch reached London without the title. The promoters pointed out that Pete was supposed to defend his title against Wilde and how could he do that when he didn't have it?

"A non-title fight does not draw as much money as a title fight," the promoters pointed out to Herman. "So," they said, "we'll pay you only £4000."

"The contract calls for £8000," protested Herman.

"Sure it does," agreed the promoters. "The whole thing will look good in court. The contract calls for you to defend your title against Wilde. Now you haven't a title. You broke the contract."

Herman saw the point and agreed to £4000...payable after the fight.

That seemed to end that, but on the day of the fight Herman told the promoters that he wanted his money before the fight or there would be no fight. He said too, that unless he got the full £8000 on the spot, there still would be no fight.

The promoters began to sweat. It was one thing calling off the fight a couple of weeks beforehand — it was another cancelling it on the day of the bout, with all the tickets sold. They agreed. Herman demanded cash. They didn't have it with them. Would Pete take a cheque? Yes, Pete had to be satisfied with a cheque.

Herman grabbed the cheque and went to the bank. It was after 3 pm — the bank was closed.

That night Wilde hopped onto the scales and tipped the beam at seven stone four — his usual weight. He asked to see Herman weighed. The promoters told him Pete had weighed in at two o'clock

and that he weighed 8.6.

Wilde protested. He pointed out that the contracts called for a ringside weigh-in.

"Yours did," agreed the promoters, "but Herman would not sign unless he weighed in at two o'clock."

Wilde fumed. He knew that Herman would enter the ring at about 8.10. He flatly refused to fight.

The promoters began to panic. Another big fight was billed for that program — between British heavyweight Bombardier Billy Wells and American Battling Levinsky, former world light-heavyweight champion — and the fight fell through, the crowd being notified to that effect only after they had taken their seats.

Word quickly spread that Wilde had refused to fight. A riot was imminent. At that point the Prince of Wales sent word to Wilde that he wanted to see the fight. "For the Prince I will fight," said Jimmy and out he went to the ring.

Wilde looked sick. When the Prince saw that he advised the Mighty Atom not to fight, but Wilde was adamant.

Jimmy Wilde was a spent force. No longer was he the wizard he had been and in the 17th round the referee stopped the fight, carried Jimmy to his corner and said to him: "Jimmy, you never did know when to stay down."

The next morning at 10 o'clock, Pete Herman presented his cheque at the bank. The cheque bounced! Herman raced out looking for the promoters. They too, had bounced — right out of England. Herman never did get his money.

Wilde was concerned in another

fight with unusual sidelights. That was against British featherweight Joe Conn who weighed nine stone. Conn was considered the best featherweight in England, even though he wasn't champion.

The bout was mooted for August 31, 1918. But there was a fly in the ointment — Wilde was in the Army, thus he could receive no money from a fight. Of course, Jimmy refused to fight without payment.

Then someone had a brainwave — why not give Mrs Wilde a present of diamonds — £2000 worth? Jimmy agreed.

But a further hitch occurred — the British Police went out on strike on the day of the fight! It was the first and only time it happened in England. How could the traffic be controlled? Who would control the crowds going to the fight?

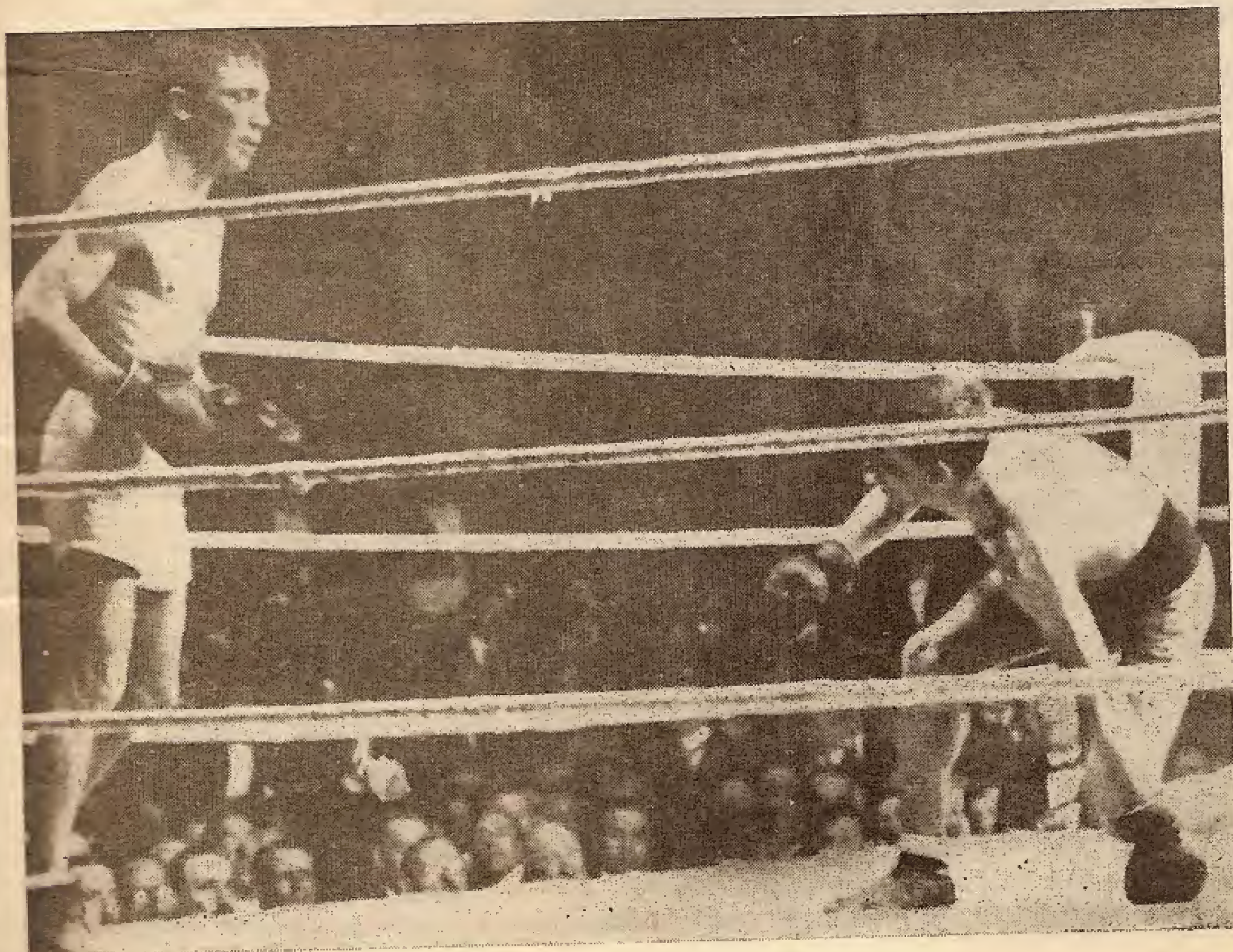
The promoter pulled a few strings and on the night of the fight 700 soldiers from military hospitals did police duty.

Wilde won the fight by a knock-out in the 12th round. Mrs Wilde received her £2000 in diamonds and everybody was happy. The day after the fight Mrs Wilde traded her diamonds for £2000 in cash.

It gives us a good feeling when we do good turns for others. Sam Russell, former British fighter, later referee, was one who got that feeling often. He raised thousands of pounds for charities.

He was a life governor of several hospitals. So when he saw former fighter Alf Mansfield down on his luck, Sam experienced that familiar glow — he would help Alf.

Mansfield had been a good



The Prince of Wales sent word to Jimmy Wilde that he wanted to see his match with Pete Herman (left). Herman won hands down—but collected no money!

fighter — he had lasted 20, 10 and 13 rounds with Wilde. Now he was blind and broke. Russell told Mansfield that he would run a benefit for him. Mansfield was overjoyed. Sam made the arrangements. He was given the London Pavilion, rent free, by C. B. Cochran. He formed a committee, arranged for boxers and vaudeville artists to appear and made several hundred pounds for Mansfield, which Sam handed over to the former fighter, together with full accounts of money paid and money received.

Mansfield should have been overcome with joy. He wasn't. He refused to accept the accounts given and claimed that Russell had not paid him all the money to which he was entitled! Mansfield took the matter to court. He lost. He pursued it to the High Court. But the hearing had

not gone far when he withdrew all the charges.

Sir Francis Newbolt, in dismissing the action, said the case was "imprudent, ungrateful and unnecessary". Russell was cleared completely of any stain on his honor.

The courts have been called upon to give verdicts arising out of fight decisions and edicts issued by boxing commissions. Last year the New York Athletic Commission stripped Paul Pender of his world middleweight title and gave recognition to Dick Tiger as champion. Pender took the matter to court. He won his case. But he has not been able to force the New York Athletic Commission to reinstate him as champion. In fact, all world boxing commissions have refused to recognise Paul as champion since his stripping by the NYAC.

On January 21, 1921, American

bantamweight Packey O'Gatty beat Roy Moore on a foul in three rounds. The next day the New York Athletic Deputy Commissioner Walter Hook withheld O'Gatty's purse, changed the decision of the bout to "no contest" and suspended O'Gatty, his manager and the referee for 90 days.

O'Gatty and his manager, Jimmy Twyford, instigated legal proceedings against the Commission for interfering with the referee's decision. O'Gatty and Twyford won the case and O'Gatty was paid.

On December 19, 1952, Joey Giardello received a split points decision over Billy Graham in a middleweight fight at Madison Square Garden. Commissioners Bob Christenderry and C. B. Powell changed the scorecard of one of the judges, thus giving the verdict to Graham. Giardello took the matter to court.

The court ruled in favor of Giardello and that is how the verdict reads in the record books — Giardello outpointed Graham.

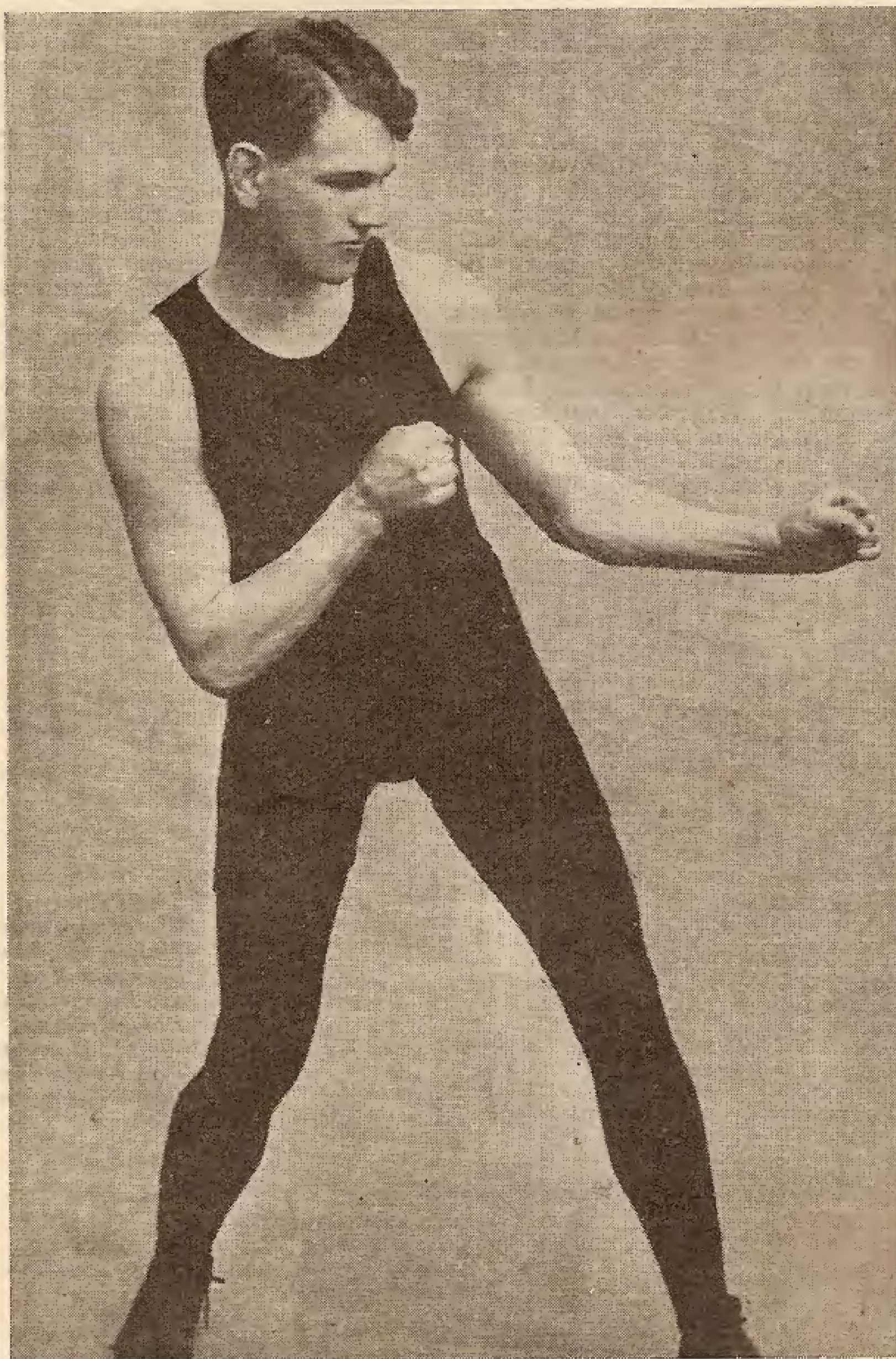
Leaving the courts and returning to the ring, boxing was banned at various times in the past — but banning did not prevent the sport taking place. On July 8, 1889, John L. Sullivan defended his world bare knuckle championship against Jake Kilrain at Richburg, Missouri. Sullivan won by KO in the 75th round. It was the last world bare knuckle heavyweight championship.

Kilrain was arrested for taking part in a prize fight and sentenced to two months in gaol. A peculiar rule of the day allowed prisoners to be farmed out — at a price — to work for the buyer. Jake was "bought" by someone in New Orleans — a state where boxing was legal — and while still a prisoner, Kilrain fought and won a fight for which he collected 1500 dollars.

Bare knuckle fighting and boxing with gloves are as far apart as the poles. The style of fighting was different, the ring was different, the rules were different, the training was different. But one method of training I saw detailed in an old 1880 newspaper was unorthodox even for the bare knuckle days. Here it is verbatim from that paper:

"The White Star of Texas is now in training to enter the prize ring. He will fight Gopher Bill in this city next Monday night for 1000 dollars, and after the fight intends to knock out Sullivan for 10,000 dollar stakes. At present The Star is undergoing the most remarkable course of training on record. This week he has been walked around Franklin Square with a dumb-bell fastened to each leg. He has had iced-water baths in a tub, and has had his legs beaten black and blue with billiard cues.

"Today he was hitched to a swill cart and trotted three miles. After that a beer barrel was tied



Jimmy Clabby, who was Cyclone Johnny Thompson's second in his match against Tim Land, consistently hurled abuse at referee "Snowy" Baker's handling of the fight.

to one leg and a dumb-bell to the other, and he walked a mile. Then he was again beaten with billiard cues, and sand-papered from head to foot. His diet is bananas. For drink he is given a mixture of brown stout, mustard, gin, vinegar, molasses, soda-water and pepper sauce. His name is Harry Snagg."

With that kind of training he would be a snag only to himself! Don't know how he got on with Gopher Bill but he never fought John L. Sullivan.

There was a time when big Pat Comiskey was being touted as "the next heavyweight champion of the world". Max Baer put a stop to that when he skittled the big Irishman in the first round in 1940. Up to then Big Pat had won 25 of his 30 fights by knock-out.

Pat carried on after the Baer fight and by the end of 1951 he had had 84 fights in his career, winning 57 by KO. The lad could punch.

It is his last fight in 1951 that I wish to chronicle. His opponent was Joe Kahut. In the first round Pat hit Joe so hard on the head that Kahut's pants split all the way down the back! The referee did not stop the fight and all those present saw a lot of Kahut until the bell ended the round. Only then was he allowed to don another pair of trunks! The bout lasted the scheduled 10 rounds, with Comiskey the winner on points.

The great American negro, Sam Langford fought Australian Colin Bell one day in temperature of about 120 degrees. At the end of the 15th round the referee declared a draw. Langford appealed to the official. "Let us have a winner. Mr Referee. I'll race Mister Bell over 75 yards and whoever wins the race wins the fight."

Bell, a fine athlete, agreed. The two lined up, the referee dropped his cap and away they ran. Near the end Langford was ahead but Bell threw himself at the tape and the race ended in a dead heat. So the fight result stayed a draw. Later the two met again, with Langford winning by knockout.

Some 35 years ago two heavyweights by name Dillion and Dockstader, met in America. In the second round Dillion landed a hard right on Dockstader's jaw. Dockstader immediately dropped his hands, turned on his heel and walked to his corner. He reached for the stool and sat down. The referee followed him to see what was wrong. Dockstader just looked at the referee casually and said: "He's too good. I quit."

During an exhibition tour in 1924, Jack Dempsey stepped off at Alabama. Jack bowled over a couple of locals and quickly ran out of sparring partners. The exhibition was given in a theatre, with fans paying to watch, so Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, urgently sought additional sparring partners.

A big negro volunteered. "Done any boxing?" queried Kearns.

"Yussah, I boxed Sam Lang-



Reg "Snowy" Baker refereed the December, 1910, match between Tim Land and Johnny Thompson. He became so exasperated with Thompson's chief second that he landed a punch himself.

ford," replied the negro.

Quickly the negro was hustled into the ring. Gloves were tied on his hands and the bell sounded. Dempsey came out of his corner in his customary weave, feinted with a right and hooked with his left. The punch caught the negro on the jaw, dropping him to the canvas.

The referee, noting the negro was OK, said to him, "Get up, Sambo."

"Nosir," replied Sambo.

"Aren't you gonna fight any more?" queried the referee.

"Yussir, Ah'm gonna fight some more—but not tonight." And he refused to get off the floor until Dempsey left the ring.

In February, 1927, a rough American lightweight named Johnny Reisler had his last fight in Australia. Johnny was beaten here by Billy Grime and American Joe Hall, disputing the decision on each occasion. Then came his final Australian fight. The opposition was Australian Billy Richards. The venue was Sydney Stadium.

Referee Joe Wallis warned Reisler repeatedly for breaches of the rules. Reisler was very annoyed at

the rebukes and by the last round the American was fit to be tied. Came the final bell and Wallis rested his hand on Richards' head, signifying the Australian as winner. Then, as was Big Joe's custom, he abruptly turned his back and walked to the ropes, preparatory to leaving the ring.

Reisler let out a roar, ran after Wallis and hit him twice. Wallis quickly turned and drove Reisler back across the ring with two heavy punches. Reisler quickly returned to action while police, seconds and spectators piled into the ring.

At least 20 men congregated at the scene of action on one side of the hempen square. Then came the sound of creaking timber—and the ring tipped on one side, tumbling much of its human cargo into the aisle.

That unexpected event saved an ugly situation from developing into a full scale riot. The crowd saw the funny side and burst into a loud roar of laughter.

Needless to say, Reisler was put on the first available boat back to the States.

(Continued on page 57)

SUNLIT MAID



*In a sunny glade
By a rippling brook,
Stands a young maiden
With a warm sultry look.
The sun on her tresses
Gives a silvery thread—
To the rich auburn brown
That caresses her head...*



MERCY



The O'Keefes were somewhat of a legend around Suva. And when Carmel O'Keefe

THE Fijian houseboy, Eli, opened the door to John Saul. Almost before Saul could extend a greeting Jean Sinclair came hurrying. "Darling, I'm so glad you're here." Saul was conscious of the warmth and sincerity in her kiss.

"Hey! We only parted at lunchtime." He grinned at her.

"But darling, that's hours." She had a happy, infectious manner—a girl who would grow old gracefully and beautifully. John Saul was deeply in love with her.

"What's it going to be like if they post you to another flight?" he teased.

She studied him thoughtfully. "Don't tease, darling—I'm frightfully jealous and possessive." In the plain white dress with its flared skirt and bare shoulders,

and dark hair fluffed out a little, she had put severity aside with her hostess uniform.

The front gate slammed loudly in the night. Quick footsteps echoed on the cement footpath, sprang up the steps to the veranda. A hard hand hammered on the front door.

"That's Tim O'Keefe," Jean said as Eli went to answer the summons.

"O'Keefe!" Saul looked down at her, frowning a little. "You didn't tell me . . . I thought this was to be an evening for your family and I to get acquainted."

She laughed. "Of course, darling. Now we are engaged they want to have a gool look at you—to give their approval. But this is something serious that's come up. Didn't you hear the news—

about the Boyita? Carmel O'Keefe is Tim's wife."

"Good grief, I'm sorry," Saul apologised. "I didn't connect the two." He turned toward the door as O'Keefe burst in.

"Hi, Eli! Mr Sinclair in?" O'Keefe queried. He was a man of medium height . . . lithe, active . . . a sun-tanned, square-jawed face and grey, darting eyes. A man in his early 50s, he was dressed in tan slacks, a floral shirt and leather thongs on his feet.

"Hi, Tim," Jean greeted, "I want you to meet John Saul."

Saul was conscious of O'Keefe's grip. He was also conscious of the man. He'd heard a lot about O'Keefe. Only those not interested in aviation hadn't. O'Keefe flew a freighter—New Zealand, Australia, Canada—anywhere in the

MISSION

FICTION • J. C. SHELLEY



was shipwrecked on Hallett's Reef, Tim O'Keefe knew just what to do . . .

Pacific where there was freight to be delivered or picked up. A lot of flying men spoke of O'Keefe with reverence. Saul was interested in a vague way. As a co-pilot flying the Pacific route to Vancouver he had some sort of status in the flying world too. And like so many more of his kind, he was inclined to look down his nose a bit at freighter pilots.

"Your dad in?" O'Keefe barked, looking at Jean and ignoring Saul after the formality of the handshake.

"Yes."

They followed her across the lounge room and out to the screened veranda. A floor lamp threw a pool of soft light on polished boards and colored Fijian scatter-mats. Ian Sinclair rose to greet them. He was a tall, heavily-boned

man with a quiet sensitive face. Saul liked him instantly.

"Mother's taken the car to town," Jean continued, "but she won't be long. Please sit down."

Eli arrived with a tray of glasses and a can of chilled beer. Saul was vaguely worried about the apparent tension in the room but the interlude seemed to soften the atmosphere.

A cane chair protested as O'Keefe sat down. "Did you hear the news — the local stuff, I mean?" For all its quick abruptness, O'Keefe's voice was not harsh. Saul, realising that O'Keefe was a friend of the family, relaxed.

"Yes," Ian Sinclair said simply. He looked thoughtfully at the glass in his hand, obviously not

intending to say anything further for the moment.

"You mean about the Boyita?" Jean asked softly. She had sat down on a cane stool, glass held in both hands, looking down at the floor.

"Carmel was on it," O'Keefe continued quietly, revolving his glass round and round so that the light sparkled and glinted in it "There was a note on the bed about it when I got home."

"Ruth said Carmel had charted the Boyita," Sinclair said. "There was the captain and two others for crew. She wanted to paint Hallett's Reef."

"That's right," O'Keefe agreed. "That's what she said in her note. And now the Boyita's a wreck — and there's no news of survivors."

"Drink up and have another,"



"Yes, it is rather a warm night to be wearing a mink coat but that's all right, I don't have anything on under it."

Sinclair said hospitably, "there's plenty more in the refrigerator."

"I feel like going down to the pub and getting rotten!" O'Keefe said angrily.

"If you want to do that I'll go with you," Sinclair offered.

"Only what damn use would that do?" O'Keefe added. It was obvious he was only talking.

Saul had heard the news about the Boyita, but the time had not given it his full attention. Now, suddenly, it was a closer thing. He drank from his glass slowly, thinking back over airport and pub gossip — anything he'd heard concerning Carmel O'Keefe.

There was nothing dirty in any of it. Carmel wasn't the type. She was perhaps eccentric and temperamental — balmy, a lot of people maintained. Saul did not believe that part. Carmel had a gift as a painter, and a darned good one from what he'd seen of her work.

He hardly knew her personally, having seen her once or twice at

a distance when someone had pointed her out — a stout little woman with blonde hair worn in a pony tail. She was wholly uninhibited — liable to turn up at a cocktail party wearing skin-tight leopard-skin pants and a yellow blouse that left nothing to the imagination . . . or go to church in an evening gown.

But wherever she went there was never a dull moment. Carmel O'Keefe believed you were a fool if you didn't get all the fun you could out of life.

Like her husband she was somewhat of a legend around Suva. People always talked about the O'Keefes, because there was always something new happening to them. Rumor had it that when Tim arrived back at Nandi in his freighter, he'd hop in his Auster and head for Suva — but he'd never know, until he got home — whether he was welcome or not. Saul had heard they were genuinely attached to each other but fought like cat and dog.

O'Keefe swallowed his beer and

pushed his glass across the table to be refilled. "Thanks, I can do with another."

Saul got the impression the man was a contradiction. One minute he might be in the depths of depression — the next on the crest of the wave.

"You know," O'Keefe said abruptly, "we had a hell of a go in last time I was home." His face wore a smile for a instant. "It was breakfast time. I copped a plate of bacon and soft-fried eggs on top of my skull. I was a bit of a mess. Luckily I'd just come from the shower and wasn't wearing a stitch of clothing."

Jean stifled a giggle. She had apparently heard of the episode through her mother. "How long were you home for, Tim?"

"Three days. Maybe I overstayed my welcome. But then other blokes hang round their home year in year out. Strange, isn't it?" He seemed genuinely perplexed.

"What did you say to Carmel to make her act like that?" Jean persisted.

"What did I say? Just the silly sort of thing any man's likely to say to his wife first thing in the morning. I'd hopped out of the shower and was dashing about looking for some clean clothes. 'Put your clothes on—you're a big boy now!' she said. I chucked her under the chin and said, 'Hell, Carm, old girl, you're starting to show your age. Why don't you wear your corsets more often?'"

Jean got an attack of the giggles. Saul grinned, beginning to understand some of the rumors he'd heard. They were certainly a mad pair, the O'Keefes.

"All jokes aside—this is serious now," Sinclair broke in. "When I heard the news I rang Meadows—he's in the Government shipping department. It seems that a Navy patrol plane spotted the wreck just on dusk. They were able to get down low enough to read the name Boyita. She's beached on the northern tip of the reef — lying holed and half-submerged on her side. The plane crew saw no survivors."

"Hallett's Reef is 150 miles to the northeast," O'Keefe said. "It's three miles long — a series of lagoons and small atolls. One atoll, near the centre, is about an acre in area with a few palms growing on it. What the hell did Carmel want to go there for? There's plenty of palms around here she can paint."

He looked at them belligerently. "Did you know Carmel was going on this trip, Ian?" he shot at Sinclair.

Sinclair looked uncomfortable, plainly regretting the fact that his wife was not there for moral support. He sought to evade the question by calling for another can of beer.

"Did you know?" O'Keefe persisted.

"Ruth did say something about it at the time. But I don't think I took much notice. You know what Carmel's like. She's always full of crazy ideas."

"And how!" O'Keefe said sourly. "The note at home said she was going for four or five weeks—and that there were eggs and bacon in the 'fridge. I'm not certain what she meant by the latter."

"Serious as the news is, there could be survivors," Sinclair said quietly. "The Government's sending a boat in the morning. If you like I'll try to get you a passage on it."

"Too damn slow, Ian," O'Keefe protested. The chair creaked at his impatient movements. "They won't get there until tomorrow night. There'll be no news until the next day. Damn it! I'll be in Tonga by then."

Sinclair shrugged his shoulders. "It's about the best that can be done. I know how you feel about it, old chap—but what else can we do?"

"I'll hop out and have a look myself in the morning," O'Keefe said quietly.

"What?" Sinclair, startled, stared at his friend.

"I'll go in the Auster," O'Keefe said, withdrawing into himself. "Three hundred miles, there and back. That gives me 20 minutes for a look around and 15 minutes of reserve fuel when I get back. Plenty. I'll get away at dawn. Be back by eight—that'll give me time for a shave, a bite to eat and get up to Nandi for a noon take-off in the freighter."

"You're mad, Tim!" Sinclair exclaimed. "That's about 300 miles over the sea in a single-engined plane. What about headwinds—things like that?"

"Won't be anything above a 30-knot breeze in the morning," O'Keefe stated.

Silence settled on the room. No



"And avoid excitement of any kind . . . AVOID EXCITEMENT OF ANY KIND . . . AVOID EXCITEMENT . . ."

one questioned O'Keefe on his weather forecasts. Over the years he had become an expert on Pacific weather.

Saul, watching O'Keefe, felt a vast respect for the man. He had flown the freighter up from Auckland that day and was due out of

Nandi at noon the next . . . but at dawn he was proposing a 300-mile jaunt to Hallett's Reef in an Auster. Saul felt he'd be justified in thinking the man mad. But O'Keefe wasn't mad. He was going out on a mercy mission—no man could do less. Saul thought of assisting . . . but there didn't seem to be anything he could do.

"But the authorities won't let you fly," Sinclair said hurriedly, trying desperately to deter O'Keefe. He was appalled at the thought of all those miles across the sea in a single-engined plane.

"They won't know I'm gone until I get back," O'Keefe grinned. He looked happier now—contented in mind and body. He had made his decision . . . that was all there was to it. "I wonder who I can get to go with me?" He looked at Saul.

Saul realised they were all looking at him and he grinned foolishly. He was due out of Nandi himself the following evening. He knew how it would be with the skipper if the co-pilot was sleepy on the long haul to Vancouver. Also, he had no desire to go with O'Keefe in the morning—not under such impossible conditions. The man was asking for trouble.

Saul's trained, calculating mind reviewed the proposed flight objectively. He recoiled inwardly at the thought of it. In the first place there would be no permission given.



"Look Buddy, when I want your opinion I'll ask for it . . . Now then, what's your opinion?"

(Continued on page 47)

It was a gasser, but nothing to laugh at . . .

CAP THE KILLER—



OR DIE!

An oilfield man's life is tough

and tiring. And when a gasser

blows, someone's got to cap it . . .

I WALKED into the bunkhouse, stiff and sore after a day of unloading and stacking pipe, thinking it would feel good to take it easy on the bunk awhile after I cleaned up.

I had a month in the oil fields behind me and my muscles had had time to tighten up. Tired as I was, I felt good, and I enjoyed knowing the day's work was over, and that I'd done my share.

I thought I might take off into town that evening and spend a little of that first month's pay, before it burned a hole in my pocket.

I dropped my gloves and jacket on the iron frame of my cot and started toward the washroom.

"Get your stuff off my bunk, buddy," Charley Ryan's voice sounded behind me.

"What do you mean, your bunk?"

I turned around in time to see Ryan's big paws knock my jacket and gloves off the bunk onto the floor. I realised he had moved all my stuff and equipment from the space it had occupied to the place he had used, and he had moved his own stuff in to take its place. Ryan followed my glance and laughed.

"I moved your stuff. I decided I want to sleep here."

"I've been here a month. You can't just move me out of my bunk."

"Who says I can't? I'm an old hand here, sonny. You just been here a month. You got no rights here. This bunk's too nice for somebody as green as you are."

Ryan weighed 40 or so pounds more than I did and stood several inches taller. He had given me a hard time from my first day in the bunkhouse.

"Get your big tail off my bunk, Ryan."

"What are you going to do about it?"

Ryan started to laugh. I swung and caught him off balance and he went down. As he was getting up, I swung again and he went down again. Ryan began to swear.

"Why you little son of a bitch!" he yelled. "I'm going to kill you, so help me."

I was so mad I couldn't see straight. But I knew where Ryan was. I dived across the floor and landed on his shoulders and began to beat his big head against the iron frame of one of the bunks. Ryan tried to shake me off and I let him have it as hard as I could. His head snapped against the bunk frame again and he went out like a light.

Jim Kilpatrick, the foreman, came into the bunkhouse then.

"What the hell do you think you're up to?" he roared.

"Nothing. It's a personal matter," I said. The blood was pounding in my ears so I could hardly hear him.

"Well this is no time for personal matters," Kilpatrick roared again, even louder this time. "I don't know how you got him cold, but wake him up again. We're all going back on duty. A wild one blew in on number 17. We've got to cap it tonight or the whole damn field could go up."

"You mean we're going to cap a gasser?"

Kilpatrick looked at me as though I was some kind of animal he'd never seen before and didn't like the look of.

"Well, you'll learn. There's nobody else around to do it. I'll get the rest of the crew and meet you over by the car — you and Ryan, when you wake him up."

The town was Berger, Texas, and I came into it in the late spring of 1926 looking for a short-term job as an oil roustabout.

Berger was a boom town, as new as the oil field itself.

But already it was a lot bigger than towns like Centralia, with a hundred years of tradition and older ways behind them. Maybe half the towns population was made up of men who actually worked in the field—the rest of Berger consisted of the thousand-and-one varieties of con-man, quick-money artist, gambler, easy-money woman, each of whom could take a month's or a half-year's salary from a husky, not-too-bright oil worker in less time than it took to shake his hand.

There wasn't an awful lot of law in Berger. The Texas Rangers took care of major offenders—murderers, hi-jackers, and the like. They didn't have any real jail in town, and you could walk through the streets and see the prisoners out in the open on what they called "the trotline", staked out on a long heavy iron chain with shorter lengths and heavy metal anklets spanned at intervals on it.

If a man got killed in a fair fight, the law didn't pay too much attention to it, unless you could prove that the fight was really a set-up from the start. Texas law hasn't changed too much in that respect to this day.

I probably didn't look too good to the field superintendent when I presented myself and told him the front office had signed me on.

I was still in my teens, skinny at 140 pounds, and I spent my winters going to school out of the State. My neatly pressed khakis

had never had a spot on them; the white canvas gloves that stuck out of my hip pocket were brand new and obviously had never been used. When I stuck out my hand to shake his, there wasn't a callous to be seen. I was green as grass and, thinking back on it now, I guess I must have had something like nervousness written all over my face.

The foreman for the roustabout crew was Jim Kilpatrick. His face fell when he took a look at me the next morning, but he never said a word about it.

Kilpatrick was a first-rate field foreman. Whenever a job came up he pitched in right along with us. If I didn't know which end was up on a job, Jim wouldn't knock me if I started out on it wrong.

He'd pick up the work, whatever it was, and get started on it without benefit of my help. All the time he'd be talking about what he'd done the night before, or what was happening somewhere else on the field — anything except the job he was showing me how to do.

After a couple of minutes of this, I would have picked up the idea of the job without any difficulties, and could take it over from him without either one of us having said, or even acknowledged, the embarrassing fact that, up until that moment, I hadn't known the first thing about what I was doing.

I learned to admire Jim Kilpatrick, and after I'd been on the job long enough to know the ropes, I recognised that his crew was the only one on the field that consistently got its work done on time.

It was the kind of work that rounds you into shape quickly. Cleaning up around active or inactive wells, laying and connecting the pipe, digging ditches for the oil, gas, or water lines, greasing or oiling the pipe, unloading it or stacking it — I got to feel at home around the fields, and I got to like my job pretty well, maybe because it was so different from the kind of thing I had done over the last couple of years.

I guess when Charley Ryan saw me the first time he decided he was looking at something he didn't like.

Maybe it was just the difference that showed that I was just going to be in Berger's oil fields for that summer, and Charley had already been there a couple of years, and likely as not wasn't going anywhere else.

The first time I tried to talk to him he put it to me levelly.



"I'll bet you can't wait to get me in the hotel room and see how I look without my glasses."

"Kid, you keep out of my way and I'll keep out of yours. I don't like you and I don't mind telling you to your face. The sooner you get out of here, the happier I'll be."

The trouble was, Ryan wasn't as good as his word. He was a loner, and he got into a kind of mood sometimes when nothing went right for him. When that happened, he liked to ride me, and after a couple of weeks of getting pushed out of the way in the chow line, or taking wise-cracks that I didn't like the idea of taking, I got pretty short-tempered myself.

But Charley Ryan had his own kind of brains, and he worked well on the roustabout crew, and the other men looked up to him in some ways.

It was the first time I ever got into a set-up where I felt like an eight-ball, and I didn't know just what to do about it. I had always got along pretty well wherever I went before. Now I was fed up and on edge, and when I came in that afternoon and Charley Ryan tried to pull that stunt with my equipment and my bunk, I exploded.

I didn't cherish any illusions about being able to handle myself in any kind of mix-up with Ryan, who was not only larger than I, but tough and experienced. I just got to the point where I couldn't take any more without putting my back up.

But all that seemed years and miles behind me as Ryan and myself and half a dozen other men rode in the old Reo touring car Jim Kilpatrick used as transportation, racing toward the gasser that had blown in so violently and suddenly that the whistling roar of the rushing gas could be heard for

miles.

That gasser had to be capped, and we were the men who were going to do it. You'd think it would be a job for experts, but they didn't have so many experts in those days — just as they didn't have any of the safety equipment they use today for the same job.

Actually no well is "safe", but a new well is especially dangerous, until you get a head on it which will control and contain the gasses that otherwise fan out through the whole surrounding area, where any chance spark can touch it off.

When a well blows in, as this one had, you start out with a fully dangerous situation already created. You then have to put the head on the rig with the chance that if any slightest thing goes wrong, you're finished.

As we came into the immediate area of the gasser, the strong, rotten-egg sulphurous smell piled into our noses like pea-soup. If it didn't choke you to death, it would probably wind up drowning you. You get used to that bad smell if you work around the oil fields, but this was the strongest and most sickening contamination I had ever hit. None of the others on the roustabout crew liked it either.

"This is the most awful thing I ever smelled. Let's get it over with," Fedders said. He was new in the fields that summer like myself.

Ryan just grunted. "If the smell's the worst we get out of this, it'll be enough for me."

Actually the closer we got to the blown-in well, the less trouble the smell gave us. There was a stiff breeze helping, but most of all it was the force of the wild jet of gas itself — it blew itself so far out that the couple of yards close up to the rig was comparatively contamination free.

"OK. Let's go in and take a look at it," Kilpatrick said.

"Nothing much to look at," Ryan commented sourly. "It's what you don't see that'll kill ya."

I was feeling just scared enough to get sore.

"Look, Ryan, shut up," I snapped at him.

"What's the matter? Ain't you ever done this before?" Ryan said. "You getting scared?"



"Quick, make a circle!"

"Sure, I'm getting scared. Why not," I started, but Kilpatrick interrupted me.

"You ever done this before, Ryan?" he asked in his quiet way.

For the first time I saw Ryan back off.

"I see other guys do it," he said. "Lots of times."

"I thought you were talking a good job," Kilpatrick said. "We'll see how you feel about it when it's all over."

That was all that was said about it then, but I was pretty sure Ryan wouldn't forget about it.

There was an earthen ramp leading to the cellar, the pit beneath the rig floor. We walked up to it and peered into the shadowy semi-gloom of the pit. You couldn't have seen your hand in front of your face in there, the gas was so dense and smoky. It looked like a London fog, and it stank in there stronger than anything we'd hit yet. This was all gas that accumulated from the wild jet, but had failed to pass through the hole cut in the rig floor.

"We can't go in there," Fedders said. "We can't breathe in there."

"We're not coming out of there till we get the control-head on that well," Kilpatrick said. "As long as that jet stays wild, this whole field can go up at any moment."

I took a look at the control head. It was simply a heavy cut-off valve that we had to screw on to the protruding head of the casing. It sounded easy, but it wasn't. The way we would work, it was darn near impossible.

Kilpatrick's instructions were direct and to the point.

"Anybody who starts to breathe in that cellar might as well forget about coming out again. Fill your lungs with as much air as you can hold," Kilpatrick said.

"We'll start at the top of the ramp. Hold your breath, carry the control-head down as quickly as you can. Try to get it on and at least start the threads. Then come out and grab a fresh breath and go back in to finish it. I'll give you all your signals by hand. If you feel any dizziness or blackouts, get out fast on your own hook and explain it later on."

He looked around at us and each man nodded that he understood what he had to do.

"All right, the sooner we start it, the sooner it's over. One try'll do it if we hit it on the head."

I lent a hand with the control head and we filed into the cellar, underneath the rig.

Holding my breath, I looked around wildly for the casing, found it just where it was supposed to be, and that almost surprised me. It looked like it was going to be easy. As it turned out, it wasn't easy at all. The control head lifted up and fitted over the casing easily enough, but when we turned it to start the threads, they failed to start.

By this time my lungs had started to burst, and the rest of us felt the same way. We made three separate tries at setting the



"My wife is out on the road making personal appearances . . . this is her understudy."

control head on the casing and starting it, but it wouldn't start. The threads were just stubborn.

Kilpatrick glanced at the ramp. We all set down the control-head fast and got out of the cellar even faster. The open air, even foul as it was with loose gas from the general area, hit my face like a fresh breeze off a mountain lake. We caught a breath and then went back in again. The third time we tried it I caught an elbow in my ribs as we came out and exhaled too soon. I looked up at Ryan's grinning face.

"You could have killed me," I yelled, but he just grinned.

We tried a fourth time and still didn't make it, and this time one of the crew took off when we got back out into the open air. We caught up with him a couple of hundred paces away, he was babbling incoherently. He had grabbed a thick mixture of the gas into his lungs. We held on to him for a while and he eventually calmed down and came back with us.

By now we had had it pretty thoroughly. None of us wanted to

go back into that cellar and try to get that head on another time, at least not the way we had been trying it so far.

"We've already run our chances out too far on a string," Kilpatrick said.

"What do you mean? Long as we hold our breath, we're all right in there, aren't we?" I asked him.

"It isn't the gas I'm worried about — at least, not about it getting into our lungs," Kilpatrick answered. "Did you get a close up view of that threading, on the casing and the head? Do you know what would happen if a spark jumped from the grating of one thread on the other? We'd go up in cinders."

"But we oiled the threads before we tried to put the head on," I objected.

"There's always the possibility the oil hasn't got to some portion or another of the threads, either on the casing or the head," Kilpatrick said. "And we've already tried that damn thing on a half-dozen times."

(Continued on page 58)

He went through the fear-stiffened motions, his fright obvious. Once he had been the country's greatest matador . . . now he was a has-been, scared to death by a four-legged animal.

THE Wolf lay on the bed, staring aimlessly at the curtains ruffling gently in the mid-morning breeze.

He heard her footsteps coming up the stairs and stopping at the door but he did not get up. He heard her fumbling at the door while she put down the tray to turn the handle. She opened the door and came in.

She put the tray alongside him and sat on the edge of the bed. He reached for the food, ignoring her.

She reached out with a hand roughened a little with work and stroked his naked chest. "You didn't come to me last night."

He stuffed the tortillas into his mouth and grunted. "Too tired. A man gets tired, you know."

She stroked his chest more eagerly. "Tired? What do you do to get tired?"

He reached for the coffee and swilled it down. He stared at her, his eyes cold and distant as a cobra's.

"Maybe I'm just getting tired of the company."

Her hands became two frantic claws pulling him toward her. "Don't say that — don't say that. You wouldn't leave me ever, would you, Luisito?" Her eyes were suddenly two great black pools of apprehension.

He pushed her hands away. "Don't let's talk of eternities. A man gets tired and he moves on. That's all." He reached for more tortillas.

She got up and moved away from the bed. He watched the movement of her hips as she walked across the room. No doubt about it, she had meat on her and it was pretty well distributed. But a man got tired, that was all.

She turned quickly back to him, her long black hair swinging about her shoulders, the wrinkles suddenly a little more obvious about her eyes. He thought, she's getting older. He could see she knew what he was thinking.

She burst out, "Luisito, I've been thinking of selling this place and buying a vacada. A small one. We could raise cattle. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

He finished the coffee and lay back. "Raise moo-cows? How exciting."

She came back towards him, her hands reaching out, hungry for

him, but stopping suddenly because she could see he did not want it.

"Luisito, my darling, don't you want that? Wouldn't you like—"

He snarled at her, "What are you talking about, woman? Breed bulls, yes. They're noble, fine, brave. Lions with hooves. But cows—"

He turned away from her angrily. After a moment he heard her gathering up the things. He heard her go to the door and he knew without looking that her cheeks were streaked with tears, but he did not turn his head. The door opened and she left.

After a while the door opened again. He turned his head angrily. It was the boy, tiny and big-eyed.

He snapped, "What do you want?"

The boy came closer, the big eyes worshipping him. "Tell me again how it was when you fought in Seville and Mexico City, El Lobo."

The boy had her eyes, black and lustrous. He sat up and ruffled the boy's hair. He said, "Well, it was like this, much-acho . . ."

He began to talk, his eyes glowing as he began to re-create the days of glory . . .

Down below she moved across the room to pick up the bowl emptied by the priest. The priest stared at her. "Daughter, have you rid yourself of that evil man yet?"

She shook her head.

The priest persisted. "Not that such an alliance would be of any value, but has he offered to marry you?"

Again she shook her head. The priest, angular and stern, got up.

"Daughter, rid yourself of this man. He will bring great evil upon you and the boy."

She kept her head down. She

moved back across the room, the bowl and the empty saucers in her hand.

A short fat man at one of the tables reached out and took her arm, his pudgy fingers lingering on her firm flesh.

"Maria—*nena*—one second—"

She sat down, her head drooping. He stared at her eagerly. "Maria, have you and he—is he leaving?"

She raised her head, staring right through him. She said emptily, "I told him I'd buy a ranch. Just a small one. He could raise cattle. But he said no—he said —" She stopped, her mouth quivering.

The little fat man, face reddening, blurted, "That—that bum—that animal—living off a woman—"

She shot him a fierce look. "Don't say that, Don Felipe. He was a great fighter."

The fat man snorted, "That's right — was. You know, for a moment I had thought of getting him to appear at my corrida. But how foolish to think that he—"

The woman stared. "Your corrida?"

The little fat man nodded self-importantly. "Yes. The mayor of a town should put on these shows now and again. I intend to let people see I am not the peseta-pinching type the last fellow was. I intend—"

She said sharply, "Don't ask him. If he gets back there again I'll lose him forever. Can't you see that?"

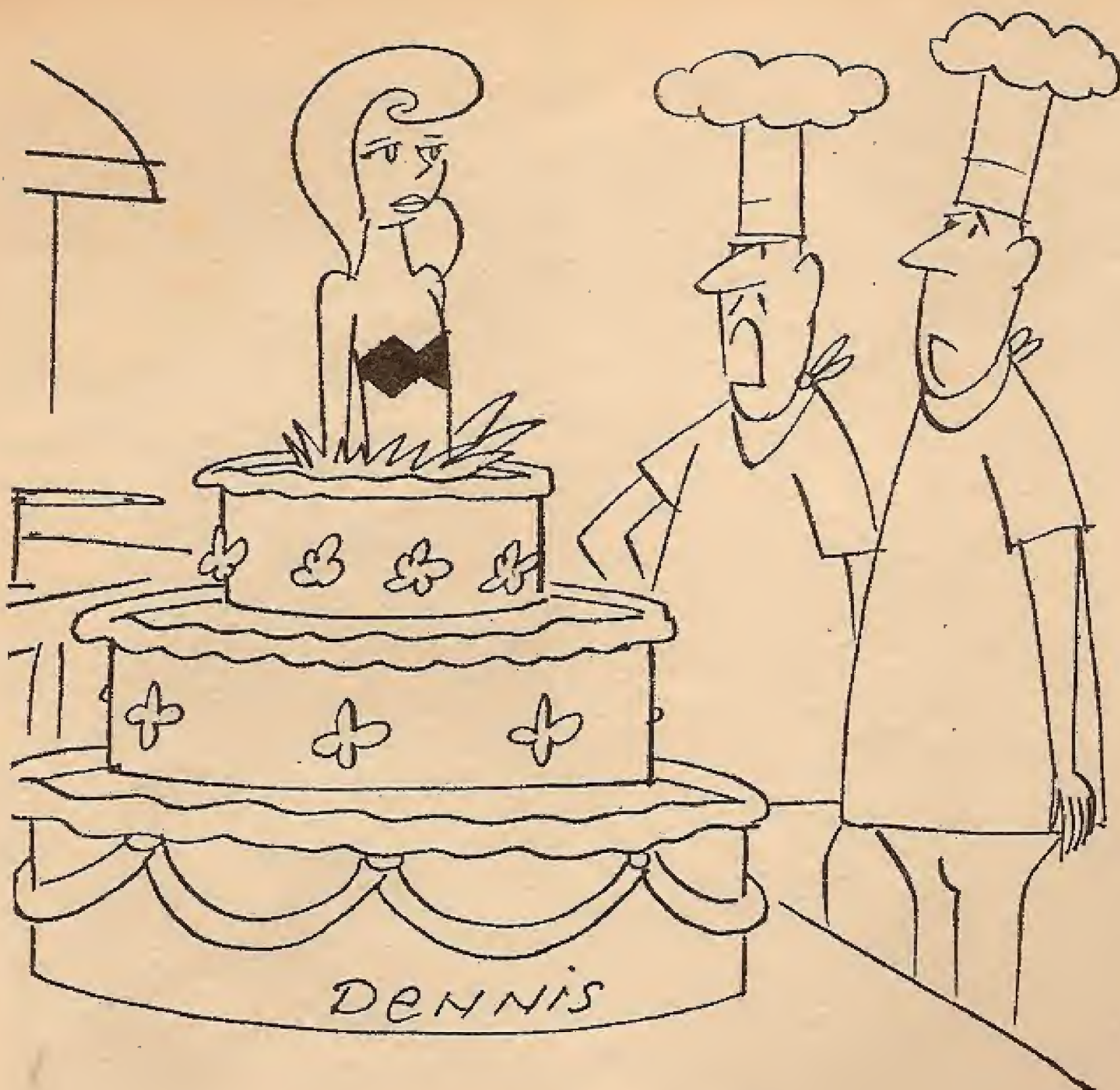
He stared back at her and suddenly shrugged his fat little shoulders fatalistically. He said softly, "You really love that bum, don't you?"

She turned her head away and got up. He said almost timidly, "Maria, my dear, I could educate the boy, give him everything he needs. And I would treat you

RETURN TO GLORY

FICTION • DAMON MILLS





"She needs more yeast."

like an infanta. You have only to say the word."

She leaned down and impulsively pressed his arm. "You're a good man, but—"

He grinned wryly. "One word. And I can wait a long time."

She went through into the kitchen. The little fat man rose from the table, sighed, and walked away.

The Wolf lounged at the table, the empty saucers stacking up beside him. When he was drinking like this he looked like a wraith that had left a body and was engaged upon an aimless search for something he did not quite comprehend. He emptied the saucer of brandy and piled it on top of the others. He thought wryly, it's nice to have a woman to supply your liquor—to supply everything for you.

The girl came in the door. The men drinking there, gnarled peasants and a couple of leathery-faced ranchers, looked across at her and gaped.

She was swathed in furs, her silken legs sleek and lithe, her dark red hair curved about her head like a glittering bronze helmet. She walked across the room to The Wolf, her every movement showing she was a dancer.

A man came in behind her, lean, tight-lipped, hard-eyed, the gold chain at his wrist matching the one slipped about his tie. The hard-eyed man looked down at The Wolf and flicked his eyes shiftily for a moment. He said abruptly, "It was her idea — this coming here to see you."

The Wolf twisted his mouth in the grin that helped get him his name. "I'll bet it wasn't yours, mano." His mouth twisted a little more as he softly used the short term for brother. He leaned back. "You look prosperous, Paco. Got a new fenomino, a crazy kid making a lot of money for you?"

The girl said, "He's got no one like El Lobo."

The Wolf looked up at her. "Ah—the goddess of loyalty, the swearer of oaths of undying faithfulness."

She said, "That wasn't called for, Luisito."

The Wolf grinned coldly. "And your running off to Mexico City with this maricon while I lay there ripped to pieces from the horns of that black monster in Seville — that was called for, my angel of fidelity?"

The hard-eyed man said sharply, "I don't like that word you called me."

"Mano, you should have been around to hear some of the things I called you back in Seville."

The girl said quickly, "I had an engagement in Mexico City. A big one. I would have lost a lot of money if I hadn't gone. And when I got back you'd left the hospital and nobody knew where you'd gone."

The hard-eyed man sneered, "You ran away. You never even went down to the empty plaza and tried moving around with a cape and a pal acting the bull for you."

The Wolf narrowed his eyes and the other man involuntarily moved back. "Stay there, manager. I'm not going to hit you. Manager's aren't worth it. We bleed, they take the money. And go to Mexico City with a buni like this."

The girl flinched. "You're tossing some nice names around."

The Wolf said softly, "You're lucky I'm not tossing you around."

The hard-eyed man said impatiently, "I told you how it would be. Let's get out of here."

The girl said urgently, "Luisito, you could get back up there again. You're still young. I want to help you do that."



"Don't lie to me, that's not war paint . . . that's lipstick!"

The Wolf grinned harder. "I'm doing all right. A woman keeps me here. Gives me all I want. You want me to come back with you, get in the chips again, and reverse all that."

The girl stepped back. "We're staying overnight. We'll see you again tomorrow."

"Not if you come before noon. I don't get up till then. She brings my meals up to me." He sneered at the girl. "I learned all your tricks. Only I practice them on women."

The girl turned and went out the door, the hard-eyed man following her and protesting about staying the night in this town. The eyes of the men in the room followed the girl.

The Wolf stared after her, face twisted cruelly, but deep in his eyes there was a flicker of rising passion. She had always been fire in his blood. He called loudly for another brandy . . .

She said bluntly, "Yes, senor, that is what I said — make El Lobo your first sword—your number one fighter—"

The little fat man stammered, "But, senorita, he is no longer The Wolf. He is just a broken-down torero living off a woman."

The girl snapped, "Who you think you are? What do you figure this is — the Plaza Monumental del Madrid? He's the greatest name any of these goggle-eyed peasants will ever see in their lives."

"Yes, yes, but — but, senorita, they all know him for a drunken hasbeen. They will not believe that he could recapture the glory of the past."

She moved across the room, a she-panther of grace and blood-quickenning allure. She sat on the desk, the tight frock riding up above her silken knees. He stared, eyes popping, sweating.

She leaned across and ran her fingers up the back of his neck, her face close against his. He tingled at the close-up cleavage. She crooned, "Now, senor, it's settled, isn't it? He will be your senior matador for this show of yours? And, who knows — you and I perhaps later—"

He stared up at her, eyes bulging, overwhelmed. He nodded silently. She slid off the desk and picked up her furs. At the door she turned and blew him a kiss. As she went out she wiggled her hips. The little fat man gasped and giggled.

The Wolf got up and went to the door. She was standing there, her magnificent brown body sheathed in a skin-tight white frock with a neckline that left no doubt she was a woman.

He stared at her, his eyes narrowing. "What do you—"

"I've stayed over for another day. Paco left early this morning. I thought you might like to come for a drive. I've hired a car."

He stared silently. She put a slim brown hand on his arm.



"Oh, thank you . . . my son will be thrilled . . . he watches you wrestle all the time!"

"Please. I've got sandwiches and wine."

He said shortly, "Wait — I'll get dressed." As he pulled his clothes on he realised with a quick flare of anger that he was getting as excited about it as a school-boy. He pushed the feeling down and went out to her. He walked silently down the stairs with her and out to the car.

Behind them the other woman watched, her eyes like open wounds . . .

They had left the orange groves behind and were slowly picking their way over the rut-pitted white road. The girl drove with ease and skill.

The Wolf suddenly snapped his head to one side. Over to the right the fenlands spread out, a great sprawling panorama of palms and eucalypts with the glittering water of sparkling pools flashing in between. Moving across open spaces between the trees and water could be seen the huge black hump-backed dots.

He said fiercely, "Why did you

bring me past the cortijo?"

She kept her eyes on the rutted road. "Just for you to look at them again. They were great opponents, Luisito. But you were greater than they. And you could be again."

He kept looking, silent. Suddenly he said, "Stop the car."

She pulled up. Without a word he got out and walked across to the rolling marisma, the wooded fens. He stepped up on to a small rise and watched. A huge black monster moved slowly from amongst a group of eucalypts, his hide like a great ebony mirror in the sunlight. The Wolf watched silently.

The girl was at his shoulder. She said softly, "The bulls of the little fat mayor will not be like that. You will kill them, those scarecrows, in a flash, like lightning striking. And you will find that you will again be a great torero valiente."

He said suddenly, "We'll eat here." With a little smile she



"What gets me . . . his explanations are so darned logical!"

turned back towards the car to get the sandwiches and wine . . .

They lay back, the grass whispering above them. She turned her head to him, running the tips of her fingers gently down his cheek. She whispered, Luisito—"

He twisted towards her, his eyes suddenly flaring. Her face broke into a happy smile and her fingers moved quickly to the fastenings of her dress . . .

Later in the car she curled up beside him as he got behind the wheel. She leaned across suddenly and kissed him tenderly behind the ear. She whispered, "It's only ever been you. Those others — they meant money, success, rungs up the ladder, money in the bank, furs on my shoulders. But it's only ever been you."

He looked back at her silently. He leaned toward her and kissed her. She broke away, panting, desire flaring up again in her eyes.

"Luisito, let's—"

He shook his head. "No nena. If I'm going to fight I'll have to get in shape. Even for the scarecrows of the little mayor. And I start right now."

She curled up against him again as he started up the motor. She nibbled at his ear, whispering, "You're cruel, my darling. But we'll make up for it later. How we'll make up for it . . ."

The woman said emptily, "So you're going back with her."

The Wolf said sharply, "I haven't fought Don Felipe's bulls yet. If I'm a flop, that's it. No more tries at comebacks. No more battling around at the 'country wars', fighting to get back."

The woman shook her head. "You will destroy those scarecrows of Don Felipe's like lightning striking."

He shot a quick glance at her. "That's what she said. It's good

to know people have faith in me."

She got up and moved across the room, half-turned from him. She said, "your women will always have faith in you. She has faith that you will again become a great torero valiente. I had faith that you could become a good breeder of cattle. But we

can't both be right. And it seems that I will be the wrong one."

She turned her back completely upon him. She said softly, "I loved you like I never loved my husband. He was a good man, a fine father to the boy, until the accident came and he died. But you . . . you made me know what love is. It's sweet as paradise — and bitter as hell. You made me want to both kiss and kill you. But without you I'll wither up and there'll be nothing left. The boy, too, will weep."

She turned to face him, her eyes too stricken for tears. "But it's in the stars. She is a goddess and you will soon again be a god. Mars and Venus. You will go a long, long way together. Que haya suerte — let there be luck, matador."

After she had gone he went over to the window and looked out. Soon he would be striking down those scrawny runts of the little mayor.

The face of the woman flashed across his mind with the pain in her eyes. He thought savagely, it would only be just if one of those bichos got the horn into me good. But then he shuddered a little and moved back from the window. He lay down on the bed until it was time to start dressing . . .

He looked around at the shambles. There were no picadors. No horsemen to lean down



"Now, stop worrying about my skinned knuckle, George. Good night, dear, and sleep well."

and sink the long lance in and weaken the bull with the loss of blood.

There was no barrera, no barricade to slip behind when the bull was really raging and escape was momentarily necessary.

Nothing. Just the huge expanse of red-hot sand and a monster seeking to kill you. Only he felt thankful it wouldn't be a monster.

As senior matador he would take the first bull. He turned his back on the opening of the toril, like he used to do a long time ago when, an invincible destroyer of bulls, he had disdainfully looked away from the monsters as they had poured forth.

The crowd was strangely silent. He turned slowly to look and something froze inside him.

It was a colossus — a bragado, a red-flanked giant with a white belly. It thundered across the sand, a great rawboned nightmare with horns like raking lances.

The mayor had dug up this demon from heaven knows where to make his show look good. And to make The Wolf look bad. As in death.

The Wolf thought, that little fat man really wants Maria. And then, sweating, he was thinking — how am I going to bring this animal down without a good pic?

He nodded jerkily at one of the peones, a bony young gypsy, to run the monster. The boy hesitated and then sidled out.

The Wolf watched closely and the sick feeling became a sudden violent retraction of the stomach. The beast slashed at the boy with one horn and then quick as lightning with the other.

The gypsy came scrambling back, white-faced. "I don't go out again, matador. That cathedral has fought more often than you."

The Wolf, swallowing hard, took the wetted cape and went out.

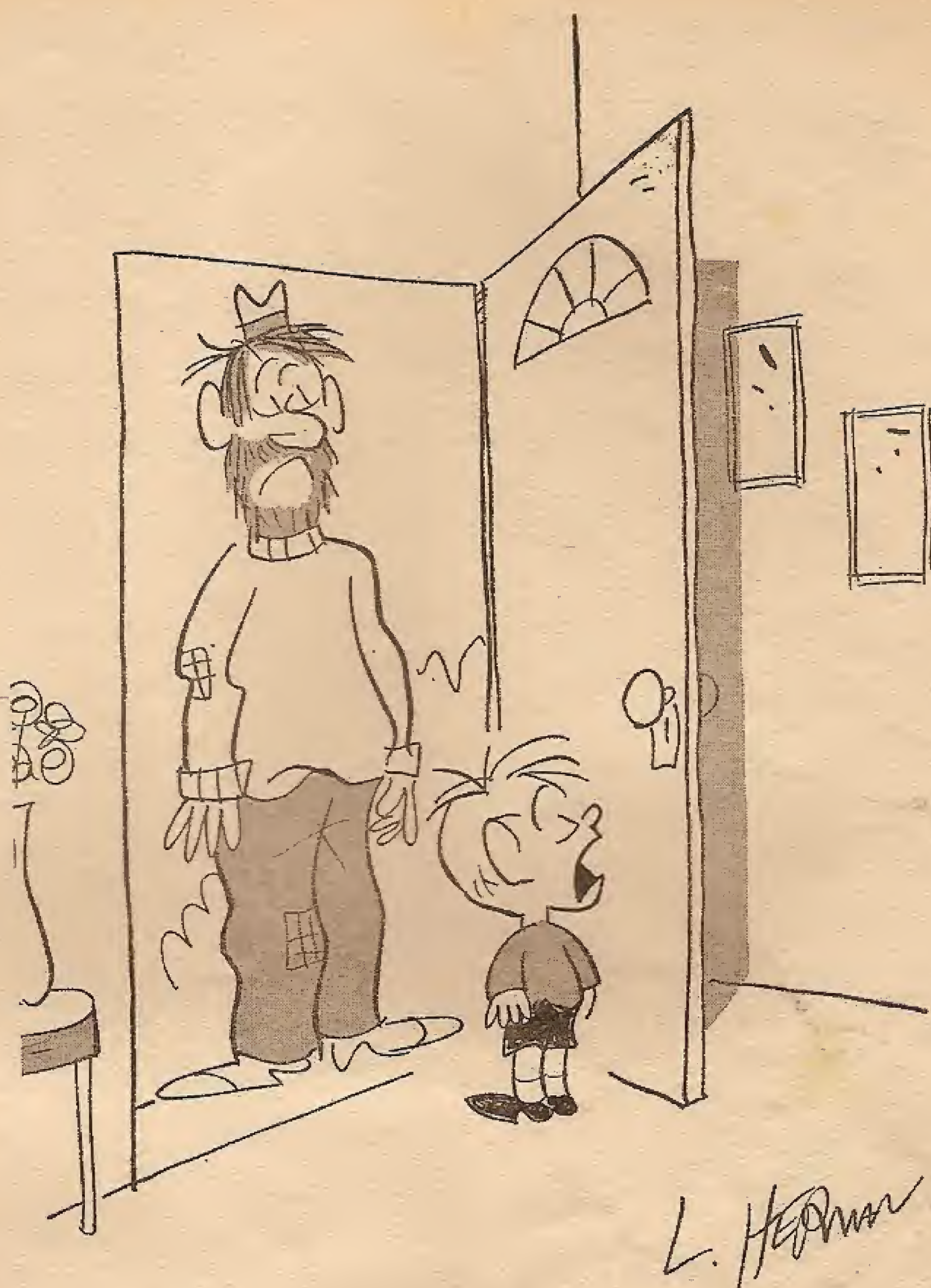
He knew from the start it was all wrong. His feet were as if he was moving in quicksand and he was a yard away from the charging demon. He did a couple of veronicas that he knew were sloppy and graceless, and once when he misjudged and the bull scraped past he jumped back as if he had been scalded. When his miserable few passes were over he was sweating and shaking as he walked away. The bull stood glowering, fresh and strong and deadly.

The sword handler was a withered old drunk the mayor had also dug up from somewhere. He looked at The Wolf and spat, "You've got a handful here, matador. But don't shake so much. They can smell fear."

The Wolf swilled the water around his mouth. "What in hell do you know about it?"

The old fellow shrugged. "I once pic-ed for Belmonte."

The Wolf, still shaking, shot a quick look at him. "Forgive me,



"Hey sis, 'Money isn't everything' is here."

mano. I'm edgy."

The old man said drily, "You're more than edgy, matador. And that's a demon you've got hold of. But take it easy. Fear invites wounds."

The Wolf relaxed a little. He was glad the old guy was there. The little fat mayor hadn't planned that bit so well.

The other matador, a kid in a faded and bloodstained suit he'd bought cheap off some fallen star, went out to do the imitation quite in pretence of taking the bull away from a non-existent gored horse.

It happened like crimson lightning. The kid took the bull past but the demon suddenly spun and hooked, wise in the ways of the cape. The boy was lifted on the horn. The bull kept slashing, snorting, eyes rolling, blood dripping from his nose.

The Wolf, shaking, went out, flapping the cape. He knew the boy was dead before he hit the sand. He made a couple of passes

on fear-stricken legs and then scrambled back to the fence. He watched them carrying the dead boy off, trembling.

The sword handler was going to say something but took a look at him and stopped. This was something only the matador himself could straighten out. Only it looked like the bull was going to do it for him . . .

He had placed the banderillas, God alone knew how, and now he was going out for the last act, the heart-shaped muleta in one hand.

He had seen her up there, her hair a coiled flame about her head, her sleek body a thing of desire even from that distance — but he did not look up. The fear and the dread of what was to come was too great.

He went through the fear-stiffened motions, his fright obvious. If tragedy had not already struck even this country audience would have been hooting him.

(Continued on page 52)

TWO BIT HERO

"Guns and shells cost money," was Cherokee's plaint . . . till he learned that the lack of them might cost his own life.

THE sheriff said, "Won't cost you a dime, Cherokee, an' it'll sure be a big help to me."

One of the possemen grinned. "Wear his wagon seat down some," he said.

Cherokee Durham was used to this. He put the point of his bony shoulder against a wagon bow and leaned out to look at the girl. She was a spare thing, he thought, with a peaked scared face and a cloudy look in her blue eyes, standing there beside the big sheriff, almost cowering.

Cherokee Durham, the medicine man, wasn't stingy. It was just that he knew the value of dollars, having been without them the greater part of his life. His dark eyes lifted from the girl to the sheriff. "How 'bout the bridge toll?" he asked in a flat, disinterested voice. "It's two bits a head for passengers, besides a dollar for my rig."

The sheriff laughed and tossed a silver dollar to the gaunt man who sat on the seat of the covered wagon. A badly-painted sign on the weathered canvas said Cherokee's Cure-All. In smaller letters underneath the same uncertain hand notified the world that Cherokee's Cure-All was good for coughs, colds, aches and pains of all kinds and every affliction on earth.

Cherokee caught the dollar and slowly took out a long leather purse and unsnapped the top and deliberately dropped the coin in the capacious depth. He rolled the purse and carefully returned it to his inside coat pocket. He said, gruffly, "Get up here, woman. Ain't got no time to waste."

The sheriff helped the woman up over the front wheel. She sat on the seat as far away from Cherokee as she could get, huddling forlornly in the corner. Cherokee hardly glanced at her as he lifted his lines.

The sheriff put his hand on Cherokee's knee. "Leave her off with my old woman," he said, low-voiced. "We'll have her man come daylight."

Cherokee looked at the girl. She gave no indication she'd heard the sheriff. He grunted and flicked his lines and chirked to his team. They moved out of the shade of the buildings into the blinding yellow heat of a morning sun.

The wagon road ran straight across the sagebrush flats and disappeared into the purple of the foothills. It took Cherokee a half a day to make it to Starve-acre Ford and during that time the girl hadn't spoken a single word. Cherokee didn't mind. He wasn't a talkative man either, except when he put up his medicine for sale.

Cherokee pulled the team off the road and into the dusty willows that lined the creek. He took out the horses and led them down to water and afterward poured a small measure of grain into nose-bags.

"You kin go to the crick and fresh up whilst I make some coffee," he told the woman. He helped her down over the wheel, feeling the bony hardness of her hands and feeling disturbed about it. He watched her pick her way around through the willows and down to the creek, trying to rid himself of the pitying feeling that grew on him.

He built a small fire and when she returned he had the cold lunch he'd fixed that morning ready, together with the coffee.

"Ain't much," he said, "but it'll do."

She said, low-voiced, "I'm not hungry."

His hand stopped with the tin cup halfway to his lips. He felt the bite of irritation in him. "Gotta keep up your strength," he said grumpily. He blew noisily into the coffee cup and then sipped his coffee.

"Why?" she cried suddenly. "Why should I?"

He looked into the tin cup, slightly rusty around the handle. "Brung it on yourself," he said laconically.

"That's what they all say," she said, her blue eyes dry and bright. "But it's not true. I haven't seen Jed for four years until yesterday."

"You got a bill of divorcement?" Cherokee wanted to know.

She shook her head a hopelessness settling on her. "I never had the money. I left him when we was married three months. I knew what he was. I came to Caliente and got a job with Morse."

"The freighter," Cherokee asked.

She nodded. "I did right well, too. He promoted me from book-

keeper to cashier. Then yesterday Jed and these two other men walked in. They ki—killed Mr Morse and took all the money. The two men with Jed were killed. One of them didn't die right away and he identified Jed."

"Why'd you try to run away?" Cherokee's coffee was cold. He drank it anyway, being a man who didn't waste anything.

"What would you have done?" she asked. "It looked bad for me. I was scared sick. I didn't know what to do. So I ran away. You don't believe me, do you?"

"For certain," Cherokee said. "I believe you." He did too. There was something about the woman that conveyed honesty and character.

"But the others," she said. "They won't."

"Better try'n eat," Cherokee advised.

"I can't," she said. Her eyes were no longer dry and bright. She put her face in her hands.

Cherokee carefully wrapped the remaining food and stowed it carefully in his wagon. He put the team in again. He helped the woman up to the seat. He said, "Get that blanket out'n the back. Make the seat a little softer." He had his foot on the hub when the rider came out of the willows.

The man's face, darkened by sun and wind, was unshaven and his eyes red-rimmed. His horse was spent. The woman cried out, "Jed!"

Cherokee dropped his foot from the hub and turned slowly because Jed Winthrop held a gun in his grimy hand. "Won't do you no good to run or try'n do anything," Cherokee said.

Winthrop kept his eyes on Cherokee after one quick look at the woman standing there with the blanket in her arms. Winthrop bared his yellow teeth in a snarl. "Mebbe so, mebbe not. Where's your guns?" He slipped to the ground with a sinuous motion that reminded Cherokee of a snake slithering over the rocks.

"Don't carry one," Cherokee said. "Guns cost money an' so do shells."

Winthrop walked to Cherokee and slapped his hand against Cherokee's ribs on both sides. He satisfied himself the medicine man had no gun and then he swung up on the wagon and crawled over



the seat and disappeared beneath the cover. He was out in a moment, grinning, holding a bottle of Cherokee's Cure-All. He knocked the neck off on the wagon rim and took a long drink of the dark liquid. "Not bad," he said. He took another drink and tossed the half-empty bottle into the creek.

"That'll be four bits," Cherokee said.

Winthrop looked at him, balancing the gun in his hand. "Charge it," he said. He put a foot on the wagon wheel and dropped to the ground. "Stay right where you are," he warned. He unsaddled his windbroken horse and threw the saddle over the tail gate of Cherokee's wagon. He slipped the bridle and tossed that after his saddle. He took the horse by the hackamore and disappeared among the willows. A shot broke the stillness and in a moment he was back.

The outlaw motioned with his gun. "Git up in that wagon," he said.

Cherokee stepped to the wagon and stood there, feeling the wagon shake and hearing it creak as the killer climbed over the tailgate and pulled the canvas down. In a moment the killer's gun bored into Cherokee's back.

"Ain't aimin' to hurt nobody," Winthrop growled, less I hafta. You jest go 'long like you was before. You git me acrost that river and I'll be hard to ketch."

Cherokee sat down and lifted his lines. He spoke to the horses and the wagon moved across the creek.

The finger of rutted, rocky road turned south on the sagebrush bench. Late that afternoon the wagon jolted and groaned over a dry rocky wash and then swung wide to plunge downward to the river, with the slender thread of wood spanning the gorge. The canvas behind Cherokee swished across and the gun probed him through the fold of rough cloth.

"Don't make no mistakes," Winthrop's hard voice said from behind Cherokee.

"You can't get away with it, Jed."

There was a note of hysteria in the woman's voice.

"Shut up, Nora," the voice said in the same hard note.

They came up to the river and Hy Epperly, keeper of the toll bridge, moved out, waving his hand to them. The old man was white-haired but still as erect as a young sapling. "Didn't see noth-

in' o' Winthrop, did you, Cherokee?"

"Ain't been lookin' for him," Cherokee said shortly.

The old man cackled. "Sheriff and his men're inside eatin'. Better light and fill up. You'll never make Caliente 'fore dark." He shaded his eyes and looked at the westerling sun.

"That'd cost money," Cherokee said. "I'll hold out till I get where I'm goin'."

Epperly cackled again. "Might know," he said. He raised his sharp old eyes to the woman. "Maybe you'd like a cup o' coffee, ma'am. 'Twon't cost a cent."

"Ain't got no time to waste," Cherokee said, feeling the gun in his spine again and hearing the faint click of a hammer drawing back.

"Dollar for the team and two bits a head," Epperly said.

Cherokee got out his leather purse and unfolded it. He deliberately counted out the money. The old man started to speak and then he stepped back and waved his hand. "So long, Cherokee," he said. "Come again."

The horses' hoofs and the wagon wheels combined to make a rumbling thunder on the bridge,

BANDITS IN BIKINIS

(Continued from page 9)



"I know I don't live here, but I've made some fortunate mistakes in the past!"

bouncing off the walls of the gorge, shutting out all other sound.

They hit the rocks and the wagon jolted and twisted. Cherokee grabbed the woman around the slender waist and jumped as the guns blasted.

The sheriff's posse were all around the wagon, with their rifles drawn and cocked. "Throw out your gun, Winthrop," the sheriff called, "Come out with hands in the air or we'll fill that wagon full o' lead."

A pistol landed in the dust and then Winthrop himself stood there staring at them. His red-rimmed eyes darted from one to the other like a cornered animal, finally resting on Cherokee.

"I'll get you for that," he said.

Cherokee offered the woman his hand. "Hurry," he said, and helped her to the seat. He followed her, gathering up his lines.

Hy Epperly cackled happily.

"Twis me, really," he said. "Any time Cherokee gives a man two bits extra, suthin's wrong. The old man grinned. "He gimme a dollar for his team 'n wagon and that was all right. It was them three two-bit pieces that made me know somebody was inside. An in this country a man just don't hide less somebody's lookin' for him. That is for sure."

Cherokee spoke to his horses and they moved out into the twilight away from the bridge. Contentment settled on Cherokee. He'd watched the woman back there and there'd been nothing but relief on her face when Winthrop was taken. He clucked to the horses. "I guess I'm 'bout the best-known feller in these parts," he said. "Most all o' 'em think I'm a skinflint."

She was silent for a long while. Then her hand reached out and touched his for a moment. "I like a savin' man," she said quietly. ●

Then Santangelo heard a dog growl, and he guessed what was happening. He didn't hesitate. He dumped his pack, pulled his assassin's .22 and dropped to the stones before crawling around the corner. As he expected, three Wehrmacht soldiers and a big snarling "police dog" faced the girl. The Yankee tanker raised his hand gun before the first German spotted him, and when the beefy corporal opened his mouth Santangelo put a slug through his right eye. The enemy NCO was dead before he hit the ground.

Everything happened quickly after that. The bulbous-nosed gun went "plop" softly twice more as the most reluctant volunteer of World War II dropped another German with a pair of bullets that sent him tottering off the cliff 130 feet to the rocks below.

At that instant, the huge Shepherd growled and charged. Santangelo didn't panic. He rolled aside, slammed the big dog on the side of the head as it hurtled past him and then finished it off with an accurate snap-shot through the back of the neck.

The third member of the enemy patrol turned to run. He covered about eight yards while the US tanker was busy with the four-legged animal. He might have gotten even further if Dixon hadn't stopped him with an expertly thrown knife that penetrated five inches into his back.

"Fantastico! Fantastico!" Angela repeated in awe as she considered the lethal blitz.

"I agree," chimed in the Englishman, pulling out the knife. "For an amateur at this sort of game, Louis, you are one fine shot. Smart too—you used the silencer. First rate performance."

"I've hosed plenty of Germans with my .50 from the tank," the lean, sober-faced Pfc said grimly. "But I never killed anybody up close before."

"It may grow on you," the explosives specialist said, grinning, as Santangelo kicked the two corpses off the trail.

That chore finished, the Pfc straightened and said: "Let's get out of here."

Ten minutes of walking up the cliff path brought the trio to an elaborate villa at the top. They advanced through the olive groves toward the big house slowly, warily reconnoitring for any more Germans who might be prowling nearby. Satisfied that it was safe to proceed, they entered the mansion through a back door.

"Kitchen," Angela announced as she took the tense GI by the hand and led him through a dark room. She opened a door, guided him down a long corridor and finally flung open another heavy wooden portal.

"Meet my dear sweet Mama," she urged the Allied operatives without warning.

They blinked in the sudden bright-light of 60 candles. It was a wildly decorated living room, all done in glowing red velvet and cluttered with a score of medieval suits of armor. Sipping coffee on green plush sofas in the middle of this weird scene were "Mama" and three of her friends. "Mama" was tall and eye-popping, a lush type with long crimson hair and green tigerish eyes. The other women were equally arresting but a bit younger, perhaps 29 or maybe 32 at the outside.

They were wearing about as much as Angela.

"We are at your service," the Junoesque 36-year-old "Mama" announced proudly as she stood up and saluted. The three busty brunettes beside her also jumped to their feet to toss off equally amateurish "highballs". Before Lou Santangelo could stop him, the irrepressible English sapper returned the salute.

"Mama" was the Contessa Maria Miscogli Travisento, an ardently anti-Facist odd-ball who was the wealthy widow of a Sicilian nobleman killed in a sports car accident in 1938. Since then, she had become passionately involved in a remarkable assortment of causes that had included astrology (1940), health foods (1941) and nudism. She was the presidente of the Italian Sun-Lovers Association, and had organised a score of bored young society women in the Licata area into an enthusiastic local chapter.

The countess was an important cog in Operation Harpoon. OSS



"I'll have that fly out of your soup in a moment, sir."

had learned that Mussolini's undercover agents of the Fascisti OVRA (the Italian Gestapo) were trying to infiltrate the main Underground organisations on the southern shores of Sicily. Behind this was a frantic Nazi effort to learn about the imminent Allied invasion from North Africa.

The uninhibited countess had al-

ready proved her devotion to the Free World by hiding out several US bomber pilots shot down on raids. "She's kind of a . . . well, a democratic nymphomaniac," one B-24 navigator had reported to USAAF intelligence when he finally reached Tunisia, "but pretty damn shrewd in her own nutty way. The Germans don't bother her at all, mostly because the commanding general of their 17th Panzers wants her more than the Iron Cross. She's playing old Rittmeister along like a catfish on a 50-pound line, knowing she's got him hooked and can reel him into her bedroom whenever she damn pleases."

Lou Santangelo wasn't aware of all this, but he had specific orders that he was to avoid contacting the local Underground and must reach his Uncle Rocco only through "Pietro and his group". He was soldier enough to obey, and realistic enough to guess that this peculiar villa might make a perfect hideout from which to strike the underground tank depot.

The 80 acres of grounds were surrounded by a nine-foot high wall topped by thorny hedge, a barrier that not only assured the sun-bathers privacy but also screened the Operation Harpoon team from the prying eyes of any German or Fascisti patrols. He made up his mind as he politely shook hands with the countess' three dark-haired friends, long-legged Rosa Capelli whose father was the mayor of Licata; heavy-hipped Serena Fadischio who had been an Olympic swimmer for Italy before the war, and the overly-made-up Julietta Sindolini whose lengthy jet tresses failed to cover a huge swelling bosom.

After a few moments of not-quite casual conversation and a



"Miss Smith, take a letter . . . and this time I mean it!"



"By George, I think you're right, Fenly. Those aren't water wings . . ."

tiny cup of strong black demi-tasse (that he nearly spilled when Signorina Sindolini leaned forward to pass him the sugar), Santangelo asked to be shown to his room where he could unload his gear.

"Of course, dear *capitano*," the totally tanned countess cooed. She had decided that he must be at least a captain since he was in command, and the earnest Pfc was too weary to argue with her. "Take him up to the Green Room — next to yours," the redhead suggested to her daughter.

The American trailed Angela up to a large bedroom on the second floor, a chamber decorated in green silk that even covered the walls. She carefully showed him the closet, the toilet — and the connecting door to her room before she left. Santangelo got the message, but it wasn't the one he had in mind at that moment. That one was the coded radio signal he had to tap out to Bizerte to let Dunwoody know they had arrived safely.

Just as he finished and started to hide the compact STR-1 short wave transmitter, the Yank heard a crescendo of sounds from the room above. He had a pretty fair idea of what they meant, but he tried to ignore them as he unpacked his weapons and checked each one meticulously. The noises stopped. Santangelo loaded each gun, made certain the pins on all the explosive and incendiary grenades were taped down, and assembled the stripped-down bazooka that OSS had supplied "for unforeseen emergencies." Then he headed down the hall to try to find Dixon.

It wasn't hard. The shirtless explosives expert was coming down the stairs from the third floor, smiling sleepily as the titian-topped countess squeezed his arm affectionately.

"These English are so very charming," she confided to Lou Santangelo with an utterly feminine sigh that left nothing to his imagination.

At that, the exhausted GI finally blew his stack. "Lieutenant Dixon! Get the hell downstairs, collect your stuff and hustle your fat butt right up to your room! Now!"

The easy-going officer gaped.

"That's an order!" Santangelo raged at the top of his lungs.

Both the demolitions specialist and the countess winced as if they'd been slapped.

"Get moving, you damn fool!" the Pfc commanded.

That outburst restored some sanity to the proceedings, and Dixon was soon asleep in his own bed with his explosives and Sten gun neatly cached within easy reach. The nudists didn't even dare to grumble, for Lou Santangelo's cutting tones had convinced them not to risk any further grief with this hard-boiled American. The capitano was young and handsome, but plainly a tough "no nonsense" officer of the old, old school. They were a bit afraid of him — all except Angela, who was secretly pleased by his masculine authority but not intimidated.

They all slept until noon that morning. When they gathered for a breakfast served by two maids whom the countess had converted to sun worshippers, everyone treated Santangelo with polite respect and deference. That was hardly surprising, for he looked and acted and felt like a battle-tested commander. It was not the gun in his shoulder-holster or the Bren that he placed on the chair beside him. It was his manner. With the same cool determination that had moved his mobster father so high in US gangland, Lou Santangelo took charge of Operation Harpoon with his first cup of coffee at 12.25 on the glaring morning of June 28.

"You're going to get your wish to meet my Uncle Rocco, Willie," he told Dixon flatly.

"I'm ready," the Royal Army sapper answered quietly. An excellent fighting man himself, the Briton realised that the party was over and it was time to get to work.

"Fine. Angela, I want you to put some clothes on and go into town," the American tanker continued. "Do you know a man in Licata named Rocco Santangelo?"

"People say that he is of the Black Brotherhood, one of the most powerful chiefs," Angela answered evenly, looking the young Yank straight in the eye. "He pretends to make his money from a winery, but everyone knows he is a capo mafioso — a leader."

"Is he a Fascisti?"

"He is a mafia don. They have no politics, no creed but that of the jungle."

"Good. Go to the winery," the OSS recruit directed, "and tell him that Don Antonio's son wishes to discuss a matter of great importance. Say that Luigi Santangelo has come from America, but speak only to him — no other."

"I will do whatever you wish," Angela promised simply.

Then she left. Two hours later, she returned with word that Rocco Santangelo had been both suspicious and non-committal but had finally agreed to meet "Don Antonio's son from America" in the wine warehouse that night at 11 o'clock.

At 9.30 that night, he set out with the 18-year-old girl for the long, circuitous hike through tomato fields, olive groves, back lanes and mule trails that would bypass the Nazi check-points ringing Licata.

It was 10.50 pm when they finally reached the crumbling stone wall that enclosed Rocco Santangelo's winery. Though he had changed to a coarse dark suit of a Sicilian peasant, the young GI wasn't taking any chances on being seen by enemy squads that regularly criss-crossed Licata to enforce the curfew. They had almost certainly discovered the bodies by the cliff, and the foe was bound to be extra-careful and quick on the trigger. Keeping to the shadows in the alley across the narrow cobblestoned street, the American listened for any footsteps that might signal danger.

He heard something—the sound of breathing in the alley itself. He turned around casually as if to whisper something to Angela, leaned toward her — and charged at the invisible ambusher. He saw the glitter of a blade in the faint moonlight, swerved aside and grabbed the attacker's wrist. It



"Don't give me that baloney about having to work late. You get right out of that bar and come right straight home . . . This has been a recorded message."

snapped like a pencil, and the knife welder's scream of pain was choked off only by three swift judo chops to adam's apple, temple and neck. Santangelo heard

him fall with a thud. The American quickly ripped off the man's bandana, crammed it into his mouth, doubled him up like a folding ping-pong table, and tied his hands and feet together with the unconscious assailant's own belt.

"Fantastico!" his lovely brunette guide sighed in admiration. "Shut up," Lou Santangelo answered in impatient irritation.

The street was clear, and there was no sound of anyone approaching. Slipping the stiletto into his own belt, the lean Yank hustled the girl across the street and rapped at the door marked "Vino Santangelo". It opened immediately, and they hurried inside without a word. Two hard-faced men glared at them in unspoken question. Lou Santangelo recognised their look. These were "workmen", the lower echelon muscle types who carried out routine beatings and unimportant executions.

"Don Rocco — immediately," he ordered harshly as a capo mafioso would.

They obeyed at once, for in the brutal Brotherhood "workmen" did what they were told without daring to think or hesitate. They led him across the courtyard, between two long rows of dusty trucks to the storehouse itself. One of the hoodlums gestured toward the brass-studded old door, and the American led Angela into a huge vaulted room crammed with hundreds of barrels. In the centre — some 30 yards away — a burly man who resembled a barrel himself waited beside a glowing kerosene lamp.

"I come in the name of Don Antonio from Chicago," the Yank called out boldly as he advanced toward the circle of light.

gerry marcus



"Arnold Jaffe! Haven't seen you since we were kids . . . you haven't changed a bit!"



"Oh, those? . . . I washed out a pair of gloves and put them on the sill to dry . . ."

He knew that a dozen guns were covering him, and that his first false move would also be his last. He walked closer until he saw the fat man clearly.

"Welcome to Licata, my nephew," the stocky stranger croaked.

Lou Santangelo's reply was as off-beat as Operation Harpoon. He pulled back his hand and slapped the fat man as hard as he could across the mouth.

"Stop these imbecile games!" he shouted. "Are the Mafiosi of Licata all children? Is this the way to greet the son of a great don?"

Angela wondered whether he'd gone insane. Her thought was interrupted by a loud echoing guffaw, a raucous bellow that bounced and reverberated off the wooden casks as a greying hawk-faced Sicilian stepped out of the blackness.

"It is Luigi! Luigi! What a boy! Just like his papa!" the swarthy well-dressed man in the dark silk

suit rejoiced. "It's my brother's boy from Chicago!" he called out proudly.

Lou Santangelo, who had recalled the family photo he'd seen so many times in his youth, recognized that this was the real Rocco. Half a dozen other lanterns blazed suddenly on all sides, and 11 armed Mafiosi closed in with noisy greetings. His hunch had paid off, for he'd guessed what they expected from the offspring of a top US racketeer. Now he had to play it to the hilt.

"I kiss your hand, Uncle Rocco," he announced in the traditional ceremonial salutation that the Brotherhood accorded a don.

During the next hour, Lou Santangelo forced down half a bottle of sour-sweet red wine and told the leaders of the local Brotherhood what he wanted. They had to help him find the Nazi's secret cave, and to co-operate in crippling the 17th Panzer's tanks stored there.

"Not so easy this week. Stinking patrols everywhere. The Tedeschi are crazy-sore since this morning when they found three of their men and a dog wiped out by the cliffs," one of the Mafiosi declared.

"My capitano took two of the soldiers and the wolf-creature all by himself," Angela boasted.

"Button your lip," the tall GI told her curtly. It was stupid to talk about such things to anyone, for nobody could tell who might be a Nazi stool-pigeon. The girl looked as if she were about to cry at the rebuke, but she remained silent while the American concluded the arrangements with his beak-nosed uncle. "The Brotherhood takes care of its own." Rocco Santangelo promised solemnly a moment before his nephew led her out for the hazardous journey back to the villa.

Angela sulked all the way, went to her room in bitter silence. The Pfc from the Third Armored tried to forget her while he encoded and radioed another report to OSS in Bizerte, but as he finished he could hear her sobbing through the connecting door. First he cursed her vanity, then he swore at Dunwoody and Larsen for getting him into this miserable deal, and finally he went in to apologise. He sat down awkwardly on the edge of the bed to try to comfort her, reached out to pat her slim, warm shoulder reassuringly. That did it. Before he could speak, Angela was against him . . .

The next afternoon, a milk vendor delivered a note from "Uncle" reporting that one of his wine trucks had passed a Wehrmacht gasoline convoy rolling five and a half miles west of Licata. The Sicilian driver had attempted to follow the German tanker-vehicles only to be stopped by eight heavily armed MPs who warned him to stay out of "this restricted military area".

While Lou Santangelo was sweating out the search for the secret base of the 17th Panzers, three ABwehr counter-intelligence units attached to that German division were trying just as hard to find him. Their monitors had picked up his coded flashes to OSS and efficient radio-location teams were prowling the rural roads in D-F vans nightly. Expecting that the foe would use such trucks with direction-finding equipment, Santangelo and Dixon hiked or bicycled several miles from the nudist hq for each transmission. They sent from a different location every time, and kept the messages down to the 60 "number groups" that OSS had recommended. Once, for an important message, they even set up the radio in a tent-cabana on the beach, while Nazi tanks and trucks rumbled by on the road only a few yards away. Lt Col Dunwoody kept radioing back urgently for "positive action", which came more rapidly than the Allied team in Sicily expected.

In the pre-dawn hours of July 5, Lou Santangelo was tapping out

a message from a ruined barn north of town while the English demolition expert perched as sentry on the half-gutted roof. As soon as the American finished, he heard the regular code signal that meant "please repeat because reception poor". He started to do so, and actually sent three-quarters of his report a second time before he was interrupted. A dagger thudded into the floor only inches from his feet, and he looked up to see Dixon waving frantically. The sapper had tossed the knife to warn him. When the midwesterner heard the noise of an approaching vehicle, he guessed why.

He was right. Only 200 yards away was a German D-F van, its probing antenna pointed directly at the barn. As it nosed closer slowly, Lou Santangelo edged back into the darkness and drew two grenades from the pockets of his shabby peasant's jacket. The enemy truck stopped right in front of the sagging building, and four Germans with machine-pistols stepped out.

They were only a few yards from the doorless portal when "Willie" Dixon hammered them into the ground with one seven second burst from his Bren. At the instant that the Briton nailed them to the earth, Santangelo lobbed his first grenade under the van. It exploded with a blast that buckled the truck chassis, which erupted into flames three seconds later when the GI flipped a thermite bomb into the wreckage.

"This is going to make old General Rittmeister even more starchy," the veteran British behind-the-lines operator predicted.

"It isn't helping my disposition either," Santangelo snapped as he packed up the radio swiftly. He knew Dixon was right, that the Nazis would be furious about this massacre — and would mercilessly "rake" the whole province with roundups and raids to hunt down



"I thought I had nothing to live for until a friend introduced me to my wife . . . now all I think of is revenge!"

the offenders. The young GI should have been worried, but he was annoyed instead.

His outlook didn't improve at all when they got back to the Villa, for 10 Wehrmacht motorcyclists stood lounging in the driveway guarding an imposing staff car that flew the guidon of a German general. Santangelo and Dixon dropped to the ground, stared from the shrubbery at the bald bullet-headed man who stood

in the window pouring wine for the countess. It was the first time that the American had seen her with her clothes on, and also his first look at the commandant of the 17th Panzers.

"Private Santangelo, meet Major General Otto Ernst Rittmeister," the saucy demolition expert whispered mockingly.

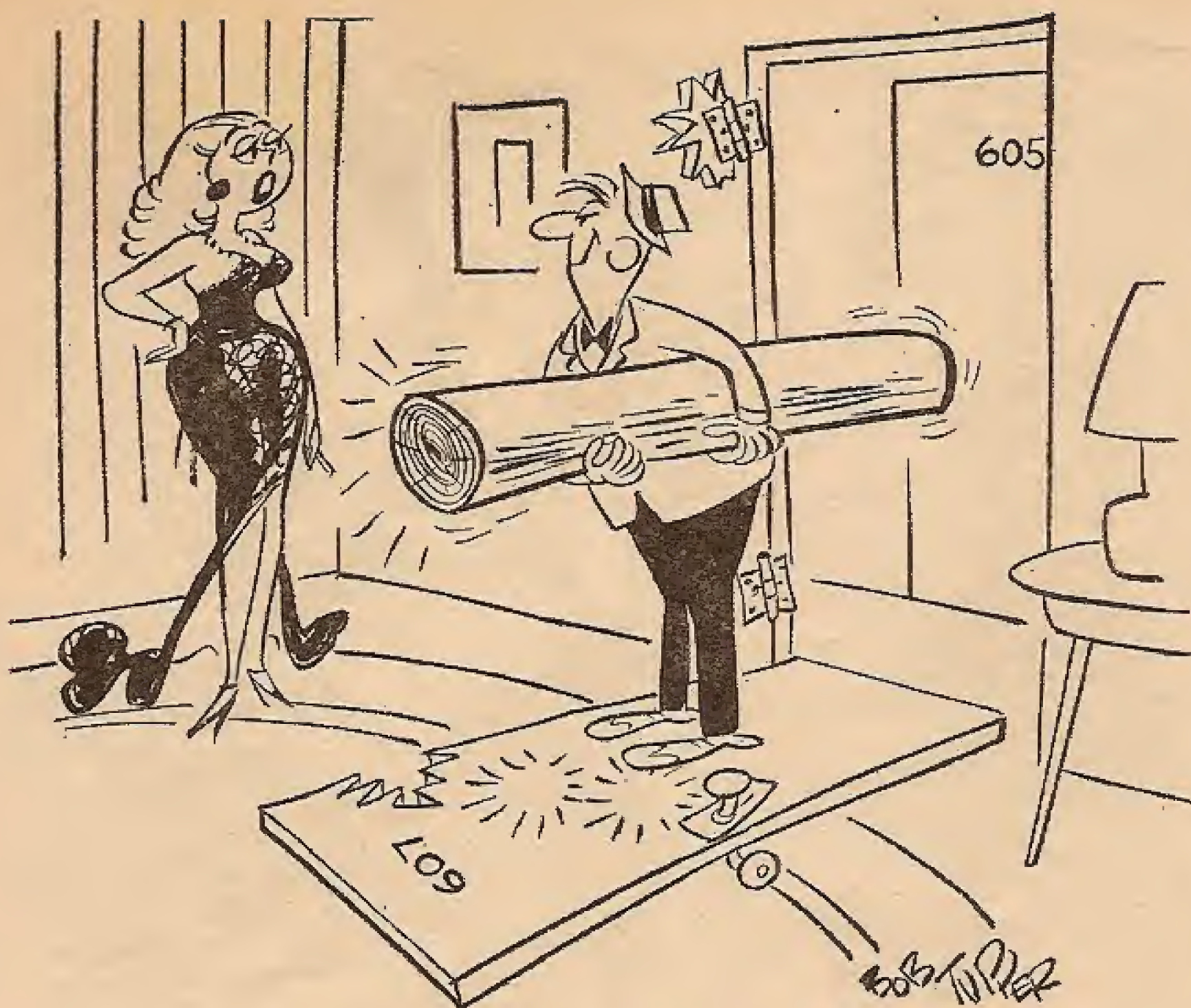
The lean midwesterner swore. Two of Rittmeister's aides were busy peering down the low-cut gowns of Serena Fadischio and the top-heavy Julietta Sindolini, and the sound of phonograph music made it clear what was happening. The unpredictable countess was entertaining the enemy brass, whose faces and loud laughter confirmed that they were enjoying it immensely.

Lou Santangelo and his partner had to wait in the uncomfortable thicket until nearly 3.0 am when the Germans finally departed with much hand kissing, heel clicking and a few discreet pinches. After the echoes of the Nazi caravan faded down the road, the Allied agents entered to find the sun-loving ladies shedding their dresses to return to their usual comfortable nudity. A black-and-blue mark on Signorina Fadischio showed how hard the pinches had been. All three women insisted that the Nazis had arrived uninvited with the pretext that they had "just been passing by".

"Maybe. Maybe they're just girl-chasing, but they're not idiots," Santangelo warned. "Don't try to outsmart those Germans — just stay away from them or you'll



"I'll bring you a serviette next trip."



"You don't discourage easily do you, Raymond?"

tip our hand by asking the wrong questions."

"But they can tell us about the cave," pouted the titian-topped con-
tessa.

"We'll get the information some other and safer way," the Yank ordered.

It arrived the next afternoon, in one of the Mafia chieftain's wine trucks. Rocco Santangelo himself was the driver — and the messenger. A goat farmer had seen 11 tanks being hauled toward the great stone crag that was known locally as Satan's Peak, a massive black promontory overlooking the coast eight miles west of Licata.

"That must be the place," the Brotherhood boss assured his nephew. "There used to be plenty of smugglers's caves up there, and the Tedeschi could easily have blasted out the walls between a dozen of them to make that one giant garage you seek. I propose that we attack at once, and I have brought my men."

The young American glanced out at the truck, saw no one.

"There are 14 of my toughest 'workmen' concealed inside the empty barrels," Don Rocco explained shrewdly, "and I've brought two more empty casks for you and your helper. We'll pass through the check-points, wipe out the sentries near the cave and shoot our way in to bomb those tanks with your excellent Yankee fire grenades."

"I'm willing to try it," the mid-westerner answered after a few seconds. "What do you think, Willie?"

"Damn chancey because they'll have more troops inside, but I'll take a whack at it," the Englishman agreed.

They loaded the explosives and their Brens, climbed into the casks and started off toward Satan's Peak. It was cramped and stifling hot inside the barrels, with only a little air entering through the one-inch bung-holes in the sides.

After 80 minutes of this suffering, the concealed commandos felt the truck slow down for the first check-point. They heard the Mafia

leader mutter something to the Nazi sentries, then an exchange of laughter as the vehicle picked up speed again. It was 4.50 by the time the truck passed the third enemy post, and at 5.05 it swayed to a creaking halt.

"Everybody out," Rocco Santangelo urged as he dropped the tail-gate.

One by one, the 16 half-suffocated raiders wriggled from their pitch-black prisons to stand blinking and stretching in the still bright July sunlight. Two of the "workmen" vomited, and another crumpled when his cramped legs gave way under him. Within 15 minutes, however, they were all moving slowly in a long skirmish-line toward the mountain only a mile away. They got to within 600 yards of the black volcanic crag before their plan literally blew up in their faces.

One of the Mafiosi hit an invisible trip-wire, setting off the buried charge that killed him instantly. Another stepped on a "bouncing Betty" anti-personnel mine that flew up into the air, exploding a rain of steel bearings that reduced him to agony. Two more booby-traps went off before a Nazi mortar crew began pounding this patch of woods with round after round, the blasts barely covering the alarm siren that began to howl a hideous call to the security troops in a nearby camouflaged bunker. The raiders fought back courageously, killing more than 30 of the foe with rifles, automatic weapons and OSS-supplied grenades as they stubbornly tried to shoot their way inside.



"Shake! Any friend of Irma's is a friend of mine."

It was hopeless. The "workmen" and the two Allied agents were outnumbered seven to one by battle-tested soldiers, and nine of the attackers perished before Rocco Santangelo yelled the order to withdraw. They started to run, but only five men reach the truck. They jumped aboard as the Mafia chief gunned the motor desperately, roaring away only seconds before their Wehrmacht pursuers burst on to the road with machine-pistols blazing. They had to abandon the truck two miles away, splitting up as the sun began to descend. The march back toward Licata was a nightmare, for not only were dozens of motorised patrols out, but the avenging General Rittmeister sent up five light Storch observation planes to drop flares.

It was a miracle that Lou Santangelo and Dixon somehow staggered into the villa at dawn, panting and jolted by the futile blood-letting. The situation looked completely hopeless. It was July 7. Allied troops would be landing in Sicily within 72 hours, and Santangelo's buddies hitting the Licata beaches would be smashed head-on by Rittmeister's concealed steamroller. With the Mafia wrecked, Operation Harpoon seemed doomed.

"We don't have the men or the explosives," Santangelo brooded grimly. All of Dixon's plastic had been lost in the wild cross-country escape, and none could be parachuted in by OSS in time.

All that day the German scout planes zig-zagged over the whole area. The roads were closed to civilian traffic "until further notice", for Rittmeister was taking no further chances. Now that the Nazi general realised what was up, he sealed off every gully and trail that led toward his key underground base.

That night after dinner, the peculiar Contessa Maria Miscogli Travisento came up with a plan of her own.

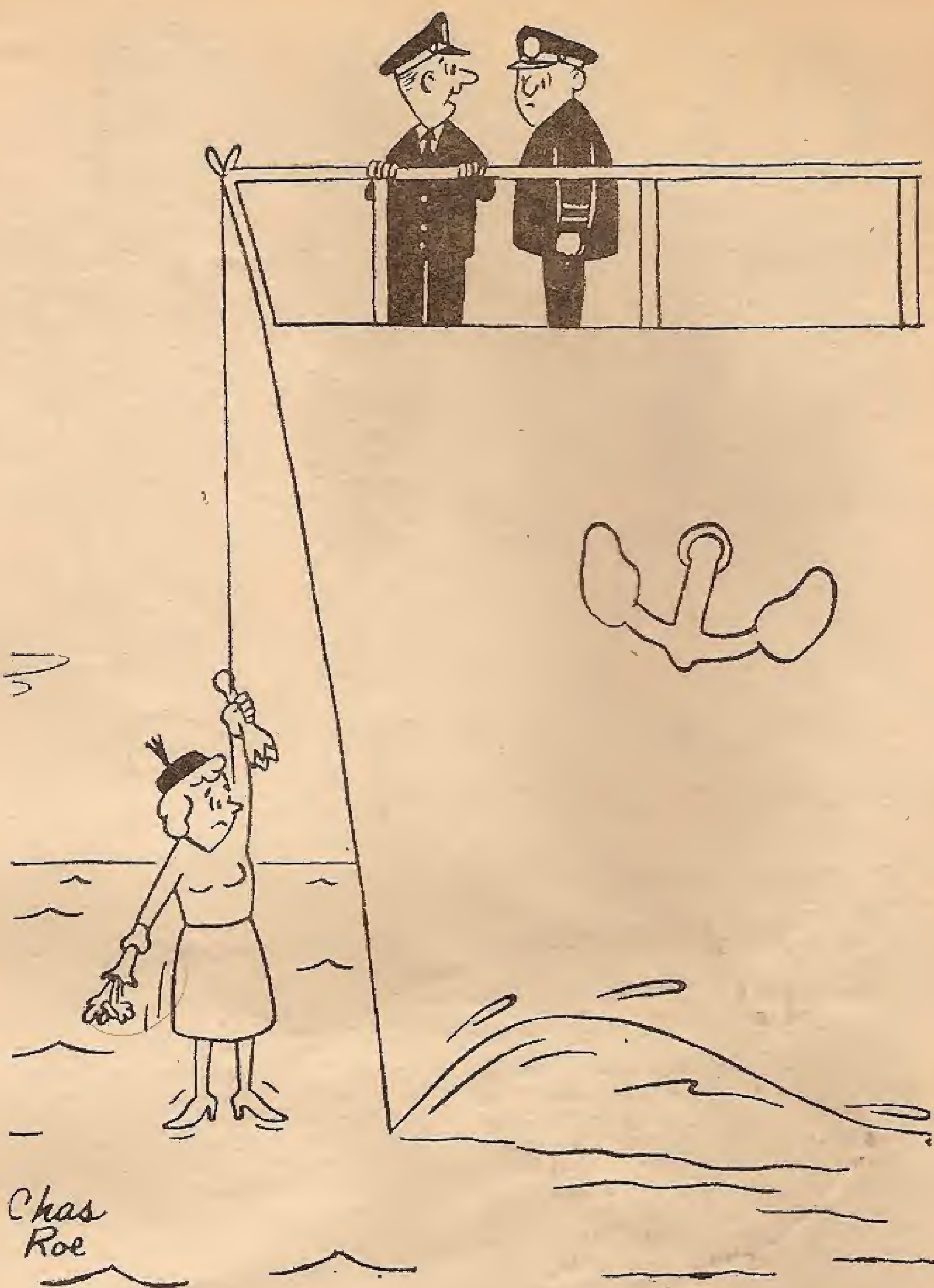
"Absolutely crackers," judged Willie Dixon.

"Nutty. Nutty. Nutty. It can't possibly work," concurred Lou Santangelo.

"Mama's notions are . . . strange, but do you have any better suggestions?" slim Angela asked anxiously.

Santangelo shook his head. Dixon shook his head. They glanced at the women, shrugged and nodded. It was a million-to-one scheme, but they had to try it.

At 3.0 am on the morning of July 9, seven semi-nude women and two determined men set out from the Villa Travisento in the moonlight to attack one of the most impregnable bases in Nazi Europe. The males were wearing their uniforms, for if they were to perish on this suicide mission they wanted to die as soldiers. The strange column trekked silently to the cliff, descended the trail to the beach where Santangelo and Dixon had landed and retrieved the hidden raft. They in-



"Isn't that the lady who christened this ship last month?"

flated it with a tank of cooking gas, and the men climbed aboard it with their Brens and the bazooka. The women surrounded the float as it drifted off the sand, and began towing it slowly up the coast. Under the leadership of ex-Olympic swimmer Serena Fadi-schio, they paddled steadily with the help of the swift moving current that carried them west. The two Allied agents, each festooned with sacks of grenades, were surprised by the speed that their bizarre craft made up the rocky shore.

Shortly before five o'clock, the tired but proud women pulled the raft up on a narrow rocky shelf at the base of the towering black crag. The entire group lashed themselves together with a 60-foot rope, and started to climb the almost sheer wall.

Somehow — by sheer stubbornness — the young American finally led his odd flock up on to the top 50 minutes later. They were shiv-

ering with fatigue and their muscles were twitching, but they untied themselves and took their bearings. They were less than 300 yards from the gaping mouth of the cave. A tommygun toting guard dozed on each side of the opening, facing inland because everyone with any brains knew that the cliff could not be scaled.

The raiders moved closer. When they were 70 yards from the opening, they could see the illumination cast by powerful floodlights inside. They were inside the mine fields, so they inched around until they could peer directly into the shaft. It was an amazing sight, a huge, high-roofed chamber with several tanks only 30 yards inside. Santangelo put down his bazooka, pulled the assassin's gun and silently slew one of the sentries. The other raised his machine-pistol as he saw his partner crumple, and the sharpshooting mid-westerner cut him down with two more bullets.



"She certainly manages to get out of a dress just about everything she puts into it."

As he fell, the German's Schmeisser hit the rocks with a noisy clatter. The impact released the safety catch, and the automatic gun stuttered an ear-splitting burst that wiped out any chance of surprise. Five more soldiers charged up the tunnel toward the mouth, only to be whipsawed by bursts from the Brens in the arms of the contessa and her young daughter. Amazed at the sight of the half-clad women and shocked by the sudden attack, the Wehrmacht survivors dodged back to avoid the grenades being thrown by Dixon and the two maids.

At that moment, busty Julietta Sindolini and long-legged Rosetta Capelli sprinted forward to try to seize the guns dropped by the dead sentries. As they reached the corpses, a sudden roar belched from the mouth of the cave. Lou Santangelo saw one of the massive Tiger tanks rolling forward, picking up speed as a Nazi lieutenant yelled orders.

The tall, thin GI dropped low, raised his bazooka and sighted carefully. The enemy vehicle was only 20 feet from the opening when Lou Santangelo pressed the trigger. He didn't miss. The rocket hissed swift and true to its mark, penetrating the Tiger's hull and exploding inside to wipe out the crew instantly. The tank erupted into flame, belching choking black smoke that blinded the other Germans inside the subterranean base. The fire reached the Tiger's cannon shells, which began to

blast deafeningly in all directions. "Let's go!" the American ordered.

He turned around, saw that two of his nude commandos were dead and another was bleeding from a bullet wound in her stomach. She tried to crawl toward the shaft in

one final effort, but her life was leaking out on the rocks too swiftly.

Santangelo hustled Dixon and the four remaining women back to the cliff, and they went down a lot faster than they had scaled it. Gashed and bruised on the sharp volcanic projections, they reached the bottom just as they felt the whole side of the mountain shudder. Something had exploded inside the cave — something big.

They launched the raft, all climbed aboard and let it drift out in the current. The tide was running even stronger now, so they were a mile away when the entire top of Satan's Peak was blasted off in an enormous explosion. A huge pillar of fire spewed skyward, resembling the nightmare scene of an eruption of Mount Aetna.

The current carried the raft out into the Mediterranean, where a mine-sweeper covering the advance of the Allied invasion flotilla picked them up that night.

Less than nine hours after their rescue, US, British and Canadian armies stormed ashore on Sicily. There was heavy fighting for Patton's troops near Licata, but they broke inland because the enemy had almost no tanks in the immediate vicinity. The fantastic cloak and dagger mission saved thousands of GI lives.

Lou Santangelo, who got a battlefield commission for his exploit, later married young Angela Travisento. She inherited the "countess" title in 1959 when her mother died, but doesn't talk to her California neighbors about her noble name. Under strict orders from her investment banker husband, she never mentions Operation Harnoon either. ●



"Have you been coaching her? That's the same line that landed me."

MERCY MISSION

(Continued from page 25)

O'Keefe, apparently, intended to fly out to Hallett's Reef and back—and then, perhaps, report to the authorities. That was a pretty serious thing to do.

What was going to happen if O'Keefe struck trouble out there? A man could lose his licence over a thing like that—ignoring authority. The book laid down some pretty strict regulations. It was unthinkable . . . against all training, reasonableness and authority.

On the other hand, what the devil would happen if the Auster developed engine trouble? And what about navigation? Hallett's Reef was a pretty small pinpoint to hit on the nose even with an expert navigator in charge. And what about the margin of safety—the point of no return? It was all very well for O'Keefe to say he'd have 20 minutes time to fly around the reef and still have 15 minutes of fuel left when he returned to base. In theory he might have . . . but you couldn't always rely on theory.

Realising they were all still watching him, Saul knew he had to say something. "There must be someone else who will go with you," he said lamely. Inwardly he felt guilty and depressed. He knew he had failed somewhere—but he wasn't quite sure where. Even mercy missions had to be looked at rationally.

"I hoped it might be you," O'Keefe said pointedly. "I want to get some sleep. By the time I look around town and get someone it could be after midnight. I'd sooner go by myself than waste all that time."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Mrs Sinclair. Jean introduced Saul and related a brief account of the evening. "I'm going out to Hallett's Reef at dawn and John's going with him," she finished.

Saul nodded his head. It was the only thing he could do.

"How wonderful!" Mrs Sinclair looked at Tim O'Keefe. She was an older version of her daughter and John Saul admired her. "I'll go and cut some sandwiches."

"No—no," O'Keefe said hurriedly. "We'll have a snack before taking off. We'll be back for breakfast."

"And a large thermos of coffee." Mrs Sinclair was ticking off her chores mentally. Then she looked at Time. "I wasn't thinking of you or John—survivors. They might be starving. You can drop the food to them. I'll pack it in a good strong hamper."

"Thanks," O'Keefe said simply. "Thanks a lot, Ruth. I wasn't thinking of that."

Hallett's Reef came up slowly out of the brightening day ahead . . . a darkening line on the horizon and off on the starboard bow of the Auster. Saul pointed to it with a sense of relief.

O'Keefe grunted, "Bit off my



"You're probably wondering what I'm doing here . . ."

course." He sounded disgusted with his navigation. With the changed course, the golden pathway of the sun across the sea altered from right to fine left.

Saul looked down at the sea, conscious of the fear that had ridden with him for the whole time. The tension built up inside him. He fought it down for the 100th time—a nausea, a real and compelling fear. Only once before had he flown in so small a plane . . . a 20-minute joy ride in a Tiger Moth for the fun of it.

The Auster, small and cramped with its single noisy engine out front, gave him no confidence. And the sea beneath was too close for his liking. He was used to seeing the Pacific from great heights. From up there where the jets operated, the sea was a great rolling grey cloud that was meaningless in its utter remoteness. But here, in the noisy, slow Auster, the sea persisted in being too real—it had been like that all the way—and it would be like that all the way back to Suva.

There was no chance of survival if the engine packed up. Not a life-raft or a belt anywhere in the cabin. O'Keefe had just clambered into the plane and set off over the ocean.

Saul argued mentally that a man of O'Keefe's experience would have seen to all such things before he left. The obvious things . . . a few life-belts . . . a survival kit . . . the correct course. Hell! There wasn't even a map! The man just sat there and kept flying.

Yet, strangely enough, Hallett's Reef had come out of the horizon to greet them. Saul was still unable to concede a point on that. It could have been sheer luck. Even O'Keefe had admitted he'd been off course a little.

"Thirty-knot wind down there." O'Keefe broke into his thoughts. Saul looked up at the inverted blue bowl of the sky, feeling the sickness again. How the devil did the man know that. By the same token, how the devil had he found his way to the reef with nothing but a compass to guide him. With-

out being really conscious of it, Saul felt renewed respect for the elder man.

"Here, you fly her while I take a gander with the glasses," O'Keefe said suddenly. With a shock Saul realised he was being asked to fly the Auster. His mind recoiled. The altimeter showed 500 feet above the sea—the airspeed indicator 70. He felt he couldn't do it. He wanted height to practise with. He had only to make one mistake—one slight minute of hesitation in making a decision—and they'd finish up in the drink. "I can't fly the damned thing!" he protested angrily.

"It's as good a time to learn as ever then," O'Keefe grinned. "What to do is plastered on every knob and hoojar . . . written in plain English and, believe me, they're right."

Saul did not feel rebuffed. He was beginning to know this man. He put his hands on the stick gingerly and dabbed with his feet. Opening the throttle a little, he was surprised to find that things did happen in response to his simple movements. The Auster,

O'Keefe had told him earlier, would almost fly herself.

"Bring her down to 200," O'Keefe said briskly, "and ease up on the gas. There's no bowser out here." He was busy scanning the approaching reef with the glasses.

The sense of responsibility flooded in on Saul. Twenty minutes flying time at the reef . . . 150 miles back over the sea . . . 15 minutes fuel left when they reached Suva. The margin was too small for comfort. He felt the sweat break out on the palms of his hands, knowing that his fear was becoming a real thing now. If he didn't watch it carefully he'd lose control of himself and the plane.

"There she is!" O'Keefe barked, startling Saul. "It's the Boyita—high and dry on her side. Drop down and pull out at 100 and give 'em a burst as we go over. They might be asleep."

Fear prickling down his spine, Saul let the Auster fall away, her engine muttering. His arms and legs felt like tensed springs. It was hard for him even to breathe.

"Hell," O'Keefe roared, "shove

her nose down, son. We'll miss by a mile!"

Instinctively Saul pressed on the stick. The Auster seemed to hang in the sky, nose down, while the sea rushed up to welcome them.

"Pull her nose up!" O'Keefe roared. "Do you want to get our feet wet?"

Saul pulled back on the stick, opened the throttle—and with a surge of power the Auster clawed for the sky.

"That ought to flush 'em out!" O'Keefe yelled. "Here they come! One . . . two . . . three. Where the hell is Carmel?"

"There's 12 minutes left," Saul interrupted.

"So what?" O'Keefe snapped. "That's more than plenty. Fly down the eastern side of the reef and up the other. Maybe Carm's gone off on her own."

Saul banked, catching a glimpse of the long narrow reef rising from the sea as the Auster came round, then straightened to the sou'east.

"Well, that's that," O'Keefe said presently. "Come round and fly up the other side—and here's hoping—" His voice trailed off as if he didn't want to complete his thoughts.

Saul glanced at his watch—eight and a half minutes left. Not much longer to the point of no return. He saw the sun move away from his left side, then, a moment or so later, appear on his right. He opened the throttle, wanting to get this thing over and done with—and head back to the security of land . . . if they could reach it.

"I wouldn't do that," O'Keefe observed quietly. "She's more economical on gas where you had her."

Easing the throttle back, Saul suppressed his growing anxiety. O'Keefe gave a convulsive start, thrusting himself up from his seat and half out the open window, binoculars glued to his eyes.

"There she is! On that atoll where the palms are! Drop down until a get a better look, boy. Yes, there's the skiff! That's better—keep her down here."

His body was stiff as the plane raced up the eastern side of the reef. "It's Carm, all right; And do you know what she's doing? Painting those damned palms against the rising sun!" He burst into thunderous laughter, interfused with loud exclamations of wonder. "Can you beat that? Shipwrecked! Painting bloomin' palms against the sunrise! She hardly had time to look up and wave as we flew past. What a woman! Where would you find another woman like her?"

Saul put the Auster's nose up, pleased to get distance between himself and the sea. Five minutes left! He felt the sweat on his palms again. Did O'Keefe realise that time was running out? He mentioned it to the older man.

"Rubbish!" O'Keefe snorted. "If you have five minutes fuel left—or even three—when you get to



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Suva you'll still be all right." He took over the controls. Saul sprawled back in his seat trying hard to relax.

O'Keefe took the Auster to the sou'west, came round in a tight circle, put the nose down on a long glide back in to the reef again. The sea and the reef came up to them slowly, the little patches of turbulence buffeting the wings.

"Boy," O'Keefe said tersely. "Take hold of the controls and follow what I'm doing. I'll give you one run in like this then I want you to bring her in exactly like I'm doing now. There's a nor'easter blowing. We came in in the teeth of it. When we get down to the reef I'm going to hold her into that breeze with her wheels on the sand. That's what I want you to do next time in. When you've got her like that I'm going to step right out the door and leave you to take her back to Suva."

Incredulously Saul swung round to face him. "You're mad!"

"Mad or not—that's what I'm going to do," O'Keefe said stubbornly. "It's my wife down there all on her own. I should be with her."

"You're stark staring mad!" Saul said helplessly. It was then he realised that the Auster was stationary with her wheels on the sand. He held his breath. He knew he wasn't dreaming—this sort of thing could be done. The Auster's speed was down to that of the headwind . . . O'Keefe, with masterly jockeying, was holding her still. But flying of this kind took practice and an iron nerve. Saul felt the sweat break out all over him at the man's colossal nerve.

O'Keefe gunned the throttle and the Auster climbed away in a steep bank. He made a motion to Saul to take over the controls.

"I can't do it!" Saul said savagely. "Haven't you got any idea what you're asking me to do?"

"Yep. Sure do. It's my plane but I've got no objection to that," O'Keefe said amicably. "All you've got to do is sit here and fly. It's me that's going to step out the door."

"I won't do it!" Saul said angrily. "You can go to hell, O'Keefe!"

"Well, we might both do that," O'Keefe grinned at him. "If you won't do this one thing for me, boy, then we'll just keep flying around until the petrol's gone. Maybe we'll both be knocking at Saint Peter's door then, eh? How's the time holding on us?"

"We're one minute in the red, already." Saul said quickly. "You're mad, O'Keefe."

"Just about as balmy as they make 'em," O'Keefe admitted with another grin. "But on the other hand, boy—something could be wrong with my wife . . . or those others, for that matter. Look at it this way, boy. How'd your conscience be if we both fly back to Suva, and learn later—too late—that something could have been done to save a life or limb? How

would you feel about it if it was your wife down there—and there was a chance of you dropping in to see how she was?"

As he let the Auster fall away slowly toward the atoll, Saul put all thought out of his mind. He was determined not to think—just sit there and react to O'Keefe's commands. He listened for O'Keefe's quiet voice while the sea came up gradually and the reef became larger.

O'Keefe forced the cabin door open. Cool wind swept into the cabin, causing the plane to rock alarmingly until the pressure equalised. "It'll be a bit draughty on the way back—slow up your speed a little—but that will be compensated by my not being with you," O'Keefe remarked laconically. "Now you're doing fine, boy, real fine. Just keep it up all the way now—and I'll be mighty proud of you as a flyer. Ease up on the throttle now—just a little. Good. Now, when you feel I've stepped out, pull up your stick, gun the throttle—and get the hell for home. You'll just about make it. Good luck."

He was gone before Saul realised it. The Auster seemed to lift into the air. Saul pulled back on the stick, opened the throttle and glanced back over the tail of the plane. There was a settling spray and widening ripples in the lagoon near the atoll. He saw O'Keefe beginning to thresh his way toward shore. Saul breathed again.

Jean was on the airstrip when Saul set the Auster down. He switched off the muttering engine, feeling his tension unwind. He wasn't game to look at the fuel gauge. When he climbed out, his legs were stiff and trembling, he stood firmly on the ground thankful that it was under his feet at long last.

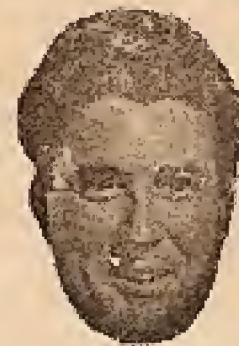
"Tim?" Jean asked, after she kissed Saul. Her eyes looked big and concerned.

"Oh, he dropped off for a cup of tea or something with his wife," he said lightly.

The world, suddenly, had become a wonderful place, full of light and warmth and wonderment. He put his arm around Jean—slowly they walked to her father's car. Later—after his nerves had unwound, after his muscles had uncramped themselves and the tightness in his throat had eased—he would tell her about the trip. At the moment he was grateful for her silence.

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MATABELE VIRGIN DANCE

(Continued from page 13)

Even more intriguing was the mystery surrounding Lobengula's treasure after he died. It took more than half a century of intensive searching to find the grave of the Matabele ruler. But the recent discovering of the grave only intensified the mystery of Lobengula's hidden wealth — a cache of diamonds and gold estimated to be worth anywhere from 10,000,000 to 35,000,000 dollars at the least.

So the search for Lobengula's treasure goes on, but a few clues, recently found, indicate that it could soon be over — unless Lobengula's old chiefs, the *indunas*, who were by his side when he died, planted the clues to mislead treasure-seekers.

Lobengula was the son of the redoubtable Zulu warrior-king Mosilikatze ("The Pathway of Blood"), who crossed the Limpopo into what is now Northern Rhodesia and founded his own tribe,

the Matabele ("Children of the Stars").

After Mosilikatze's death in 1870 he was succeeded by Lobengula. This was the year that Cecil Rhodes landed in Africa, Kimberley's diamond fields were discovered, and Jan Smuts was born. According to custom, Lobengula built himself a new capital called Bulawayo ("The Place of Killing"), where he welded his warriors into a formidable military machine and became the most powerful monarch in Africa.

Lobengula scorned European clothing and wore a kilt of baboon tails and a leopard-skin crown. Although he allowed Christian missionaries into his country, he never became a Christian himself, preferring the superstitions of Nunga, his witch doctor, who lived in a cave in the lonely Matoppos.

This gloomy cavern held such a fascination even for Cecil Rhodes that the great Empire builder expressed a wish to be buried there, his tomb lying in a spot he named "The View of the World".

Lobengula's reign coincided with the great gold and diamond rushes in Africa. The first diamonds to come into his possession were smuggled in by his subjects — secreted under armpits, in hollow teeth, or by swallowing them — and presented as tribute. Fascinated by the shining stones, for which the white men would commit any crime to obtain, Lobengula set about getting as many of them as possible. He heard that Rhodes was having difficulty recruiting sufficient labor to work his mines and offered to supply him with several thousands of his subjects as workers.

Rhodes accepted this "generous" offer and soon great armies of the Matabele went to work in the diamond fields. Lobengula changed the gangs every few months and each returning Matabele brought his king a shining tribute in filched diamonds, mostly uncut Kimberley blue-whites.

Lobengula also developed a weakness for champagne. The wine came to Bulawayo by the wagon load, presented by European concession seekers in return for the right to dig for gold, the metal which later led Rhodes to take over Matabele lock, stock and barrel.

Nunga the witch doctor warned the Monarch against the encroaching fortune seekers pouring into the kingdom, prophesying that the whites would eventually devour the Matabele lands like swarms of hungry locusts. Lobengula, however, was no fool. To everyone, whether British concession seeker or Boer hunter, he gave a little to maintain peace. He knew the folly of resisting the whites.

In 1888 Rhodes, though barely 35, reached the peak of his power, creating the world's mightiest diamond combine by amalgamating all the Kimberley mines, and becoming the most powerful political figure in Africa. A man of ambitious greed, Rhodes now turned his attention to obtaining control of another of South Africa's resources — gold.

The only man who stood in the way of his becoming the master of the entire Transvaal yield of gold was Paul Kruger, the great Boer leader, in whose domain most of the mines lay. Kruger, with his own ambitions of gaining power, entered into a secret pact with Lobengula. No sooner had the Matabele royal "Seal of the Great Elephant" been affixed on the pact than German emissaries sent by Bismarck appeared in Bulawayo to negotiate a similar treaty.

Rhodes, alarmed that his schemes might be wrecked, sent a representative to Lobengula offering — in return for repudiating the Matabele king's treaty with Kruger, and in return for the right to develop the minerals and metals of Matabele — a monthly stipend of 100 pounds for life.

The messenger who brought this provocative offer to Loben-

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gula was Kurt, and his wife Eyvette.

It's an ironic note of history which caused fate to smile on Rhodes.

Eyvette was already the talk of the Kimberley district. She was the only Afro-European who had cracked the white man's social world. Such news had travelled fast into the bush. And when she decided to accompany her husband to the Matabele stronghold, Lobengula — himself of Zulu forefathers — had planned to honor her.

The honor was to participate with him in the diamond ritual. Knowing the mind of the white man, the wily king had taken no chances. He had placed von Brandt under "protective arrest", so that the engineer would not interrupt the proceedings.

Two days following the ritual, von Brandt and his wife, still fearing the worst, were brought once more before the king. They were given clothes and welcomed as the honored guests at a feast.

The engineer finally brought up Rhodes' offer of the lifetime stipend.

The king looked long and hard at Kurt, then cast a similar look at the now fully-clothed and withdrawn Eyvette. And against the protests of his councillors, he agreed to accept the offer. He bade von Brandt to return to Kimberley to notify Rhodes.

The astonished engineer agreed. Kurt and his wife returned home under the full protection of 20 Matabele warriors.

As they walked out of the bush, von Brandt finally had the courage to ask his half-Zulu wife about that terrible night. Had she been afraid? Certainly. Why had she meekly walked to the platform? Knowledge, she replied. What knowledge, von Brandt asked.

"A Zulu chief," she explained, "cannot defile his office by having love with a woman outside the tribe. He couldn't have made love to me even if he'd wanted to," the black-eyed Eyvette explained. "The Matabeles were once Zulus. They are honorable men."

Lobengula was to find that the British were not so honorable. His wise men had been right. The Matabeles were doomed.

Too late Lobengula found he was trapped into giving up most of his lands, and tried to back out of the deal. Rhodes, threatening to enforce his part of the bargain, marched in on Bulawayo with a strong force of British troops.

Lobengula quickly placed all his treasure-filled safes in a caravan of ox carts, set afire to Bulawayo, and with his favorite general, Magwegwe, his secretary, five *induna* chiefs and an *imbeshu* regiment, fled northward into the jungle.

Fearing that the heavily-burdened ox carts would slow down their flight, Lobengula ordered the treasure to be buried in a

secluded spot. After the *imbeshu* had excavated holes and buried the safes, he executed all of them, so that the secret of the hiding place might be kept among as few as possible. The secretary, fearing his own safety, quietly deserted Lobengula.

Lobengula escaped across the Shangani (a tributary of the Zambezi), only to be felled by smallpox. As he lay dying, the king summoned the five *indunas* who had accompanied him, swore them to secrecy regarding the hiding place of the treasure and ordered them to make their peace with Rhodes to avoid further bloodshed. The king then swallowed a vial of poison, with Magwegwe following suit.

The secret of Lobengula's grave was kept for more than half a century, until it was revealed by a Matabele rain goddess who betrayed it to her white lover.

When the Native Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia and a small government party, at the request of the surviving *indunas* who had accompanied Lobengula's flight, examined the king's grave they found only a skull and a few crushed bones — and the elaborate chair presented to the king by Queen Victoria.

The old chiefs looked on in silence, then one of them said, "It was our desire that the grave should never be found and its secret never revealed. But now there is no reason why we should remain silent any longer."

Thereupon the story of Lobengula's buried treasure came to light for the first time, along with details of the king's last days. But none of the chiefs would utter a word on the whereabouts of the treasure.

So, somewhere out in the dense Rhodesian bush lies a vast hoard of gold and uncut diamonds, packed in rusty iron safes. With the scientific equipment available to treasure seekers today, it should be only a matter of patience and endurance for the treasure to be found. Unless, of course, you believe in the old witch doctor's tale that the treasure trove is protected by the spirit of Lobengula. ●

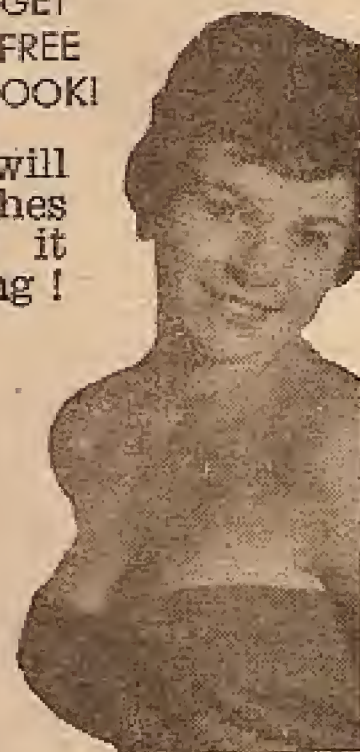
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RETURN TO GLORY

(Continued from page 35)

Now they sat and waited—silent and a little horrified — for the horn to strike this fear-stricken parody of a matador.

Halfway through the pitiable faena the bull stopped midway in a charge and hooked. The Wolf jumped back, but too late. The tip of the horn had ripped the shirt open from right to left. The Wolf stared down stupidly at the flashing whiteness of the rib before the blood swiftly turned it scarlet.

And then suddenly with the letting of the blood it seemed as if some mystic rite had been performed upon him — as if the bull had been a priest spilling blood to create life.

The fear had gone like some gibbering ghoul torn from his shoulder. The drawing of his own blood had purged him of it like a wound healed in fire.

Suddenly again the foot was firm, the wrist was deft, the eye was clear.

The muleta weaved and twisted, a cloth of magic luring the bull, mystifying, trapping, deluding. The bull charged again and again, hooves churning the sand desperately, horns vainly seeking ever-elusive flesh.

The crowd came alive from its frozen silence, cheering, rising to its feet.

The bull, breathing heavily, stopped charging and stood glaring, head down.

The Wolf, sword in hand, poised himself and called to the bull.

It came at last, a slaving monster making one last ferocious attempt to destroy this creature that had changed from a frightened target smelling of fear to a dancing tiger of maddening elusiveness.

The Wolf waited, feet nailed to the ground, and the screams of the women had come before he moved. He went in over the horns, the sword striking like silver lightning.

The bull staggered and then went on, the sword hilt-deep between the shoulders. He turned and charged again—and in the middle of the charge dropped to his knees and died.

The Wolf walked back to the fence, the crowd going crazy.

The old sword handler spat and grinned. "Loco, matador — but great."

The Wolf grinned back. "Thanks, oldtimer."

He looked up at her and he could see her standing, waving, and even where he was he could see the tears on her cheeks...

He went down to the car with them, the hard-eyed man raving.

"I thought it was a waste of time but I came back and watched. At first you were terrible but later — later mano, you were a rap-ture, a dream. We'll hold those promoters up to ransom — we'll make thousands — millions. I'll see you don't fight for less than —" he babbled on.

They had reached the car and the girl got in. She gave The Wolf a long look, full of the intuitive discernment of a woman. She said softly, "You're not coming, are you?"

He shot a quick look at her and then he relaxed, smiling. He shook his head.

The hard-eyed man stared, thunderstruck. "Not coming? What — how —"

The girl ignored him. She said, looking steadily at The Wolf, "You did it to see if you were still a man. Now that you've found out you are you're going to settle for that vacada with her, aren't you?"

He nodded. The hard-eyed man spluttered, "What foolishness is this? What —"

The girl said, "Let there be luck, matador. Stop squawking and get in, Paco. You'll have to find another fenomino."

He turned and went back inside. The boy, seeing him coming, started to run to him, screaming, "El Lobo — El Lobo — you're not going away. Mama, mama — he's not leaving —"

He picked the boy up and walked toward her. She stood waiting, speechless, loving him with her eyes.

He thought, it's going to be okay on that farm. ●

BOOBY-TRAPPED

(Continued from page 5)

But if the wires are arranged so that, the instant he *answers* the phone contact is made, well, that's that. It's the final call as far as he is concerned. A certain twisted satisfaction to it in addition because virtually he is his own executioner—his own act of lifting the hand-set off its cradle destroys him. Destroys him completely because the charge explodes directly beside him. Instant death guaranteed.

All this was churning through my mind as I dropped to my knees beside the table. I gave a sort of half-shout. There they were! The thin, practically invisible wires. And there was the detonator and the charge! My hands were trembling as I reached forward to render the detonator harmless. So much so that I had to stop for a moment to get myself under control. And then, practically before I knew it, the job was done and the entire device disconnected. With a sigh of relief I leaned back on my heels my head level with the top of the table. I forced a smile. Then it happened — *the phone started ringing.*

Automatically, despite everything, my hand reached out toward it. My confused brain managed to flash its warning signal just in time.

My hand stopped, then slowly withdrew. Lifting that receiver would be tantamount to putting an announcement in the papers intimating that the booby-trap had failed. Because chances were that the caller was the death-merchant himself endeavoring to set off his own booby-trap. If I answered it and got beyond the word, "Hullo", he'd realise straight away that something had gone wrong. Immediately he'd proceed with some alternative or stand-by plan to dispose of me. And I wanted time. I desperately wanted time in order that I could try to trap my would-be killer. So I let the phone keep on ringing.

I rose. While so doing, I happened to glance out of the window. And in the phone booth directly opposite down in the street below I saw a figure. My conclusion struck me with all the force of a sudden gale — this was the man. Yes, this was the guy. He just couldn't resist dialling my number from a nearby phone booth so that, when I answered, he'd experience the exquisite, ecstatic thrill of actually witnessing the explosion.

I started moving. Quickly. I went down those stairs three at a time. I dashed across the street telling myself that if I tore the phone away from him and found that all he was getting was the dialling tone then I'd be pretty certain I had the right man. Not conclusively, mark you, but enough to set me working on him. I snatched the door of the booth open. A little man with watery

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"I'm afraid the glamor's gone out of this business. I overheard one of my kids refer to me as 'Old Bubblehead'."

eyes behind rimless spectacles jerked round in alarm. "What on earth—" He began.

His words were cut off as I thrust him hard against the side of the booth with my shoulder. I grabbed the phone out of his hand and stuck it to my ear. But it wasn't a dialling tone I heard — it was a woman's voice. A woman's shrill penetrating voice.

"Ernest," it was demanding, "what are you doing? What is wrong?" It began to take on a rasping quality. "Ernest! What is going on there?"

I shoved the phone back at him. "Sorry, Ernest," I said. "Mistook you for someone else."

He had his breath back by now. "I'll have the law on you," he sputtered. "Forcing your way into here and—"

"Save it, Ernest," I cut in. "Save it for her." I indicated the phone which was making all sorts of indignant outraged sounds. "Your wife, I presume," I added as I moved out of the booth. "I happen to have in my room a little device which you might like to set up the next time you phone her, Ernest. Would quieten her down a bit for a start!"

"Look," he got out, "I—" "A voice is calling you, Ernest," I concluded again indicating the phone. Then I shut the door of the booth in his face.

Not very gentlemanly, I must admit. But I wasn't feeling particularly gentlemanly at the time. Understandably too, considering all that had happened. . . .

Back in my room, I sat down and lit a cigarette. As I drew heavily on it I glanced again at the phone. I gave a slight shiver. If I hadn't discovered the detonator and explosive and had answered the thing I would now be nothing more than a nasty mess.

I shivered again. And then the realisation struck me so acutely that I was almost paralysed by it. My shiver ceased and I sat up rigidly in the chair, my hands tightly gripping its sides until the knuckles showed white. *There was another booby-trap in the room.*

The sweat was now forming into tiny globules on my brow. Globules which, as I sat there, turned into little rivulets which began to run down into my eyes. I started blinking to try to clear them. Yes, there was one more device in my room. Because whoever had been was no enthusiastic amateur. I'd had proof of that by the way my near-invisible trip threads had been renewed and also by the skilful manner in which the phone had been rigged. No amateur, but more likely a professional expert. And a booby-trap expert *never, never, never*

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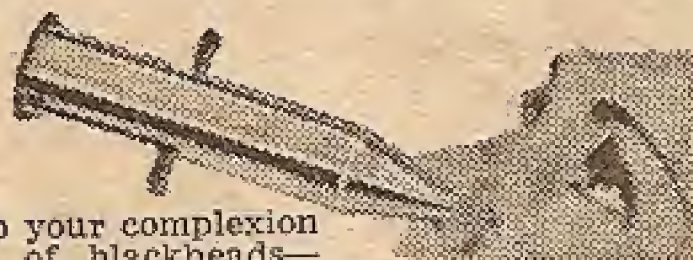
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(Mention your age!)

up for his shovel, depending on the kind of life he's led. And if by some chance one of the traps doesn't work, on the law of averages the other will. But supposing the victim's a smart character, a suspicious one. He sniffed around until he finds what he's afraid he will find — a booby-trap. He disconnects it. Then he sits back and lets his relief cast its comforting blanket around him. After a while he maybe even starts congratulating himself on his cleverness at discovering the infernal device. And a short while after that, in this disarmed and unsuspecting state of mind, he walks right into the second trap.

That's what I had nearly done — walked right into the other trap which was bound to be there. I was still rigid in the chair, my eyes blinking worse than ever as the sweat continued to trickle down into them. Supposing the chair itself had been rigged. No, that was stupid — if it had been I would have been dead by now. Nevertheless, I slowly rose and examined it. After that I began to go over the still unexamined parts of the room inch by inch.

I had almost completed my checking when my eye fastened on the small radio I kept on a shelf. That would be it! Yes, the second one would be in that radio. Boy, when it came to being stupid I just about took the jackpot — that damned radio should have been one of the very first things in the room to come under suspicion. I took a step toward it. Then I stopped — better finish checking the rest of the place first just to make sure. I did so. There was absolutely no other trap of any sort anywhere in the room. So it *had* to be the radio.

I removed the electricity plug from its socket and carefully — oh, so very carefully — lifted the radio from its shelf and placed it on the table. I pulled up a chair and sat down. Then I gently withdrew the four screws which held the cardboard backing. As I removed this backing I immediately spotted the charge and detonator. The latter was wired to the ON-OFF switch. All I had needed to do to blow myself to oblivion was to switch on the radio.

I was trembling now. To such an extent that I had to stop for

a few seconds to get a grip on myself. When I had managed to do so I dismantled the hellish mechanism. I then put it all in a drawer together with the explosive, detonator, etc which had been wired to the phone. I'd dispose of that later. In the river.

But meantime I needed a drink. Badly. I poured myself a large one. Then I sat down. I had some deep thinking to do before I made my moves. The moves which, I hoped, would reveal who had planted these two booby-traps.

An hour later I had my list of suspects narrowed down to three. A list of three compiled partly by deduction and partly by hunch. In my heart I felt that one of these three people was the booby-trapper.

My Number One suspect was Josef Stowalski. A Pole, now naturalised. He'd fought, I knew, with General Anders in Italy where he had been something of an expert in demolition. I also knew one or two other things about Stowalski. These, added to one important fact, made him my likeliest candidate. That fact was that he was absolutely on his beam ends financially and had let it be known in certain circles that he was so desperate that he'd do anything for money. And by "anything" he meant just that. Yes, Stowalski was top of the list all right. There were one or two of the Big Boys who'd dearly love to see me out of the way — and he was just the man they'd most likely hire to effect this.

Suspect Number Two was Peter Jarrow. I'd first met him during the war. In Egypt. We were retreating fast then, before Rommel's Africa Korps. And in this retreat Jarrow's main function was the laying of booby-traps to delay the advancing Germans. A cool, fearless type he was then, and I found myself admiring him for his courage. I'd met him again later when, under Montgomery, we were knocking the Germans for six. He was still on booby-traps but now he was searching for the things in order to dismantle them. That was the last I saw of him during the war.

When I met him next he was in deep, but really deep, with Andersen's crowd. And to be part of Andersen's set-up you had to be a truly rotten member of the human race. My previous admiration for him was, therefore, replaced by a profound contempt. A contempt which I expressed quite openly when I heard of some of the jobs he'd done for Andersen. Heartless, dirty jobs.

Maybe you think all this should have put Jarrow to the top of my list. And it would have. Had it not been for the fact that I had never crossed Andersen — and I didn't think Jarrow would try to kill me just because I'd openly displayed my contempt for him. Now if he'd been in Farrell's organisation, or in De Suza's, well, he would have

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been Number One without any doubt. But he wasn't and, accordingly, lay at second place. Anyway, I was convinced that Stowalski was my man.

The third on the list was Jacqueline Marete. Shakes you, doesn't it, that I should suspect a woman of setting a couple of lethal booby-traps? Shake you even more when I tell you that Jacqueline—everybody called her Jacky—was the goods. About five feet 10 in height and with all the vital statistics just as perfect as they could possibly be. Her arrival at any type of gathering would excite the admiration of every man present—it would also excite the envious hatred of every woman present.

Yes, certainly some dish. And most certainly not the kind of girl, one would think, who would be able to cope with a kitchen stove or such-like. But Jacky could cope with a lot of other things beside kitchen stoves. With rifles, for example. And with burp guns. Also with booby-traps.

I said she was French. She was. But she lived part of her life in French Indo-China. Her father was a Regular Army captain there. When the troubles started after the war she refused to be parted from him. She insisted on staying there. On more than one occasion she found herself in places into which the Viets had infiltrated. So she learned to handle weapons in order to defend herself. As the Viets gradually pushed the French back, her father, who was a dedicated expert on explosives, would prepare booby-traps to leave behind. His daughter watched him carefully. She asked questions. The dedicated captain answered them so patiently and expertly that when in due course he was killed in an ambush his daughter was able to continue his good work with a skill which would have gladdened his heart. It was a skill made expert by hatred. By a cold ruthless hatred for the men who had killed her beloved father.

I knew all this to be true. Almost incredible, but in fact true. I never mentioned it to her. Why should I? A woman's past is her own concern, nobody else's.

So she had the technical know-how and practice to rig up these two booby-traps. But what about her motive? I was stuck there, I must admit. The only thing I could think of was that maybe somehow or another she's been forced into it. There had once been vague talk of De Suza having some pull on her. Some big pull. Something which even he kept quiet about. Well, whatever it was it must have been absolutely terrific. If I was on the correct track, that is.

Anyway, for better or for worse, these were my three suspects: Stowalski, Jarrow, and Jacqueline Marete.

I moved smartly. I got the car out and drove to the lodging house where Stowalski had a room. It was a long shot that he would be in. It paid off because, when I

knocked at the door, I heard his voice asking who it was. I told him.

He asked if I was alone. I said I was. But a full minute passed before he unlocked his door to let me in. The Pole was nervous. And jittery. When I saw his face I became more convinced than ever that he was my man. But I played it gently. I said I had a possible job for him and that if he cared to come along to my place for a drink I'd tell him all about it. He didn't seem too keen to come at first but eventually agreed to.

I opened the door to my room and ushered him in. I moved to the table where I had the whisky and glasses.

"Let's have some music," I said as I did so. "Turn on the radio there, will you, Josef." I tried hard to make my request sound casual. "It's the knob nearest you," I added.

"Sure." He stretched out his hand and switched on the set. Then he sat down. *Right beside the phone.*

So, to my intense surprise, that was Stowalski out. As a kind of double-check I questioned him closely and found that his nervousness was simply due to the fact that he was owing a certain gentleman a large sum of money. That this gentleman had been threatening him with a severe working-over if he didn't produce it forthwith.

Which left Jarrow. And, of course, Jacqueline Marete.

It took me over an hour to track down Jarrow. When I did find him it was in a bar. And he'd had a drink or two. Naturally, considering I'd so openly displayed my contempt for him, he didn't greet me exactly like a long-lost brother. But I pretended that I too had been drinking quite a bit and made a sort of half-apology to him. Anyway, after a short while, we were on quite friendly terms. When the bar closed I suggested doing a night-club. He agreed. We got into my car. On the pretext of having run short of ready cash—I told him I'd been out of town all week and hadn't been back to my room since my return—I

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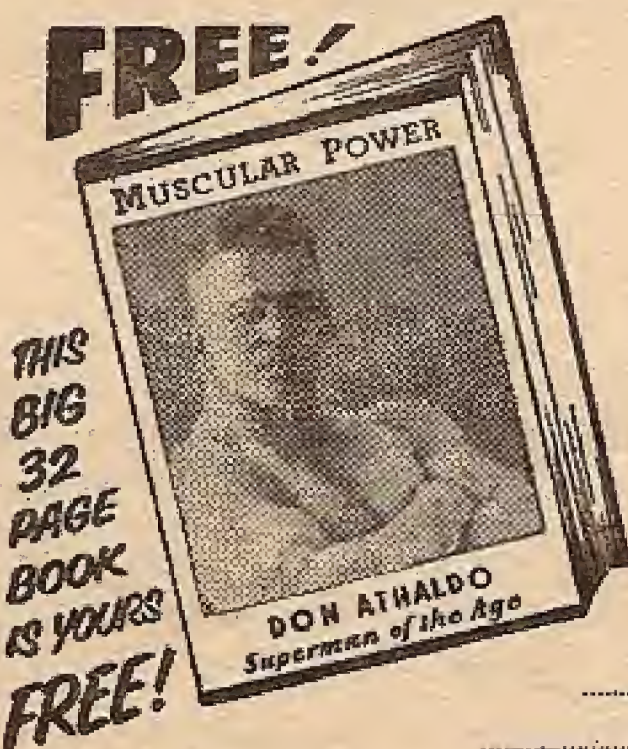
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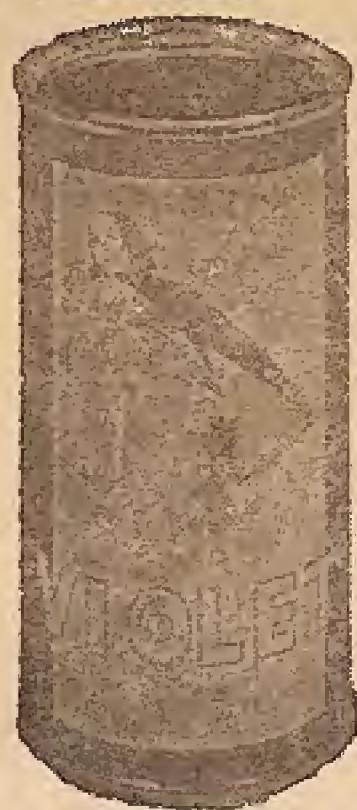
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drove to my place ostensibly to
collect some. When I suggested he
come up for a quick drink he de-
murred.

"Come on," I insisted, "It won't
take a minute. Besides, we're a bit
early for a night-club, really."

He was pretty cool. He saw I'd
be suspicious of something or
another if he continued to refuse,
so he came.

"Sit down there," I invited, indi-
cating the chair by the radio.
"And let's have some music while
I pour out the drinks, eh?"

For the first time I saw a flick-
er of fear pass across his eyes.

"There's nothing much on," he
said as casually as possible.

"Don't be daft," I grinned to
him. "At this time of night there
is always plenty of dance music."
I made a quick move toward the
set. "Just you listen!"

"No!" His hand intercepted
mine before it could reach the ON-
OFF switch. His face was strained.

"Why?" I was no longer grin-
ning. "Incidentally, Jarrow," I add-
ed, "I take it you wouldn't want
me to answer the phone if it
rings, would you? At least, not
while you're present." As I said
that I switched on the radio set.

He caught on immediately. And
he saw that any attempt at denial
would be a waste of breath. "Well,
what are you going to do about
it?" he asked. His face wasn't so
strained now.

"Get you to talk, Jarrow," I
answered.

"You'll have quite a job on your
hands."

"Maybe," I said. I turned up the
volume. As loud as it would go.
Then I started working on him. In
the end he talked. He talked
plenty. Mainly about the plans of
his new employer, a certain Big
Boy, to effect a massive take-over.
A take-over which would crush all
opposition. Mine included.

I got Jarrow bundled out of
town in double-time. I also effect-
ed certain arrangements to ensure
that his return would not be an
early one — I didn't want him to
tip off his new boss that I was
wise to everything. Because I had
some plans to formulate which
were going to concern this Big
Boy. Vitally.

But before I got down to all
this I wanted to see Jacqueline
Marette first. Maybe it was be-
cause of a form of guilt-complex
on my part for even suspecting
her of rigging up these booby-
traps. Maybe it was because I had
once been on very friendly terms
with her and simply felt, as a
result of thinking about her, that
I'd like to pick up our former as-
sociation again. So I called to see
her at the night-spot where she
was doing her act. She had just
finished when I got there. We
engaged in some chit-chat which
culminated in me offering to drive
her home. This she accepted. I
meant to do just that — drive her
to her apartment.

On the way there, I suddenly
found myself asking her if she'd
like to come up to my place for
a drink. She gave every appear-
ance of being enchanted at the
suggestion. After a couple of
shorts I put down my glass and
took her in my arms. But I didn't
kiss her — she kissed me! Pas-
sionately. And, while we were thus
occupied, the phone rang.

"Forget it, darling," she whis-
pered into my ear. "Let the thing
ring."

A horrible little barb of suspi-
cion stabbed into my thoughts.
"Maybe it's somebody important,"
I heard myself reply.

"More important than me, dar-
ling?" Her lips were brushing
against mine. "Let the silly phone
ring away to itself as long as it
likes." Her kiss — a deep searing
kiss — acted as a sort of period
to her sentence denoting that dis-
cussion of the matter was now
closed.

But to me it wasn't. My sus-
picion had grown to such an ex-
tent that it couldn't be dismissed
— my suspicion that Jarrow, de-
spite the beating-up he'd got, had
either lied or, which was more
likely, hadn't revealed that she
too was implicated in some way
or another. I unwound her arms
from around my neck and stood
up.

Her eyes were wide. "What's
wrong, darling?"

"I'll tell you just in a tick," I
said. "But in the meantime turn on
that radio there for me, will you?"

"Why? Oh, Steve, you are act-
ing very strangely."

"Never mind how I'm acting."
My words were practically ground
out. "Just turn on that radio."

She rose. Her eyes were flash-
ing. "I think you must be drunk.
Or mad. Or maybe even both." She
suddenly turned and switch-
ed on the set. "Right! There you
are! And as far as I am concerned
you can listen to your precious
radio for—" Her words were cut
off as I quickly moved forward
and kissed her.

The open hand which took me
viciously across the face hurt
badly. "You pig!"

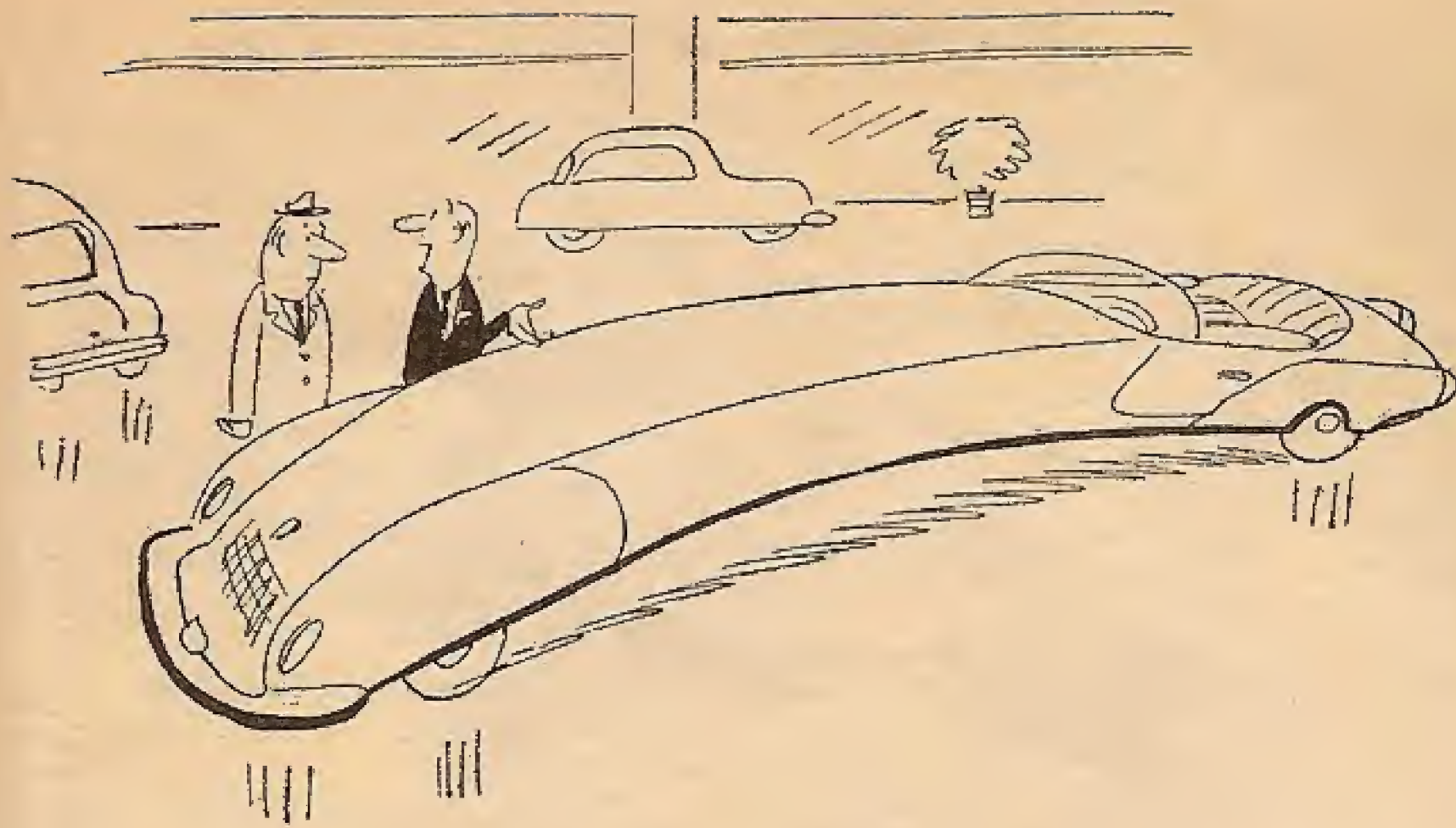
But before she could leave I had
the explosives, the detonators, the
wiring, all out for her to see.
And I was talking. Talking fast,
trying to cover in a matter of
seconds all that had happened.
She listened, still standing. When
I had finished she said quietly
and evenly: "And you suspected
even me?"

I nodded miserably. "I did."

I made no attempt to avoid the
second swing of that open hand.
But it didn't hurt. Just short of
my face, the swing stopped and
the movement turned into a cares-
sing one. It was accompanied by
a kiss. A long hungry kiss.

And very shortly after, I'd for-
gotten all about that hard sore
slap.

In fact, I'd forgotten all about
well-nigh everything . . .



"This one has a slightly longer wheelbase but notice how it conforms to the curvature of the earth?"

HE'S TOO GOOD — I QUIT!

(Continued from page 19)

Attacking a referee is not unique, although it has not happened very often. Some 40 or so years ago Wally Weekes was struck by a losing fighter. Wally was referee at the Newtown Olympia at the time. The losing boxer was Levi Cox who did not approve of Weekes' decision.

Cox bit off more than he could chew. A newspaper of the day reported that Weekes subdued Cox in under a minute. "In that time Cox was almost reduced to a case for the hospital," reported the paper, "and when Wally had finished disciplining him the crowd was almost inclined to sympathise with Cox."

In December, 1910, Australian middleweight Tim Land met American Cyclone Johnny Thompson at Sydney Stadium. The referee was Reg "Snowy" Baker. Thompson's chief second was the great American middleweight Jimmy Clabby.

Throughout the fight Clabby hurled abuse at Baker's handling of the fight—probably hoping to cow Baker into giving the verdict to Thompson. Land was well ahead on points coming into the last (20th) round. But in the 20th, Thompson landed a KO right and down went Land for the full count.

Clabby then turned to Baker and insulted him. Baker, his patience at an end, landed a punch on Clabby. Unfortunately for the fans who looked forward to an extra bout, police quickly broke up the fracas.

Another second-referee clash had an unusual ending. The incident took place at the old Gaiety at the turn of this century. The Gaiety was one of the main stadi-

ums in Sydney at the time and one of the most popular fighters to appear there was Props Reader, a rough and tough fighter of the old school.

One night referee Harry Dawson disqualified Reader for rough work. Reader's chief second jumped into the ring and dropped Dawson with a series of punches. With the referee on the floor, the second laid on the boot then quickly left the ring and raced up the aisle.

Reader raced after his second, caught him and administered a sound thrashing to him! Props was a rough fighter but he did not approve of a referee being assaulted. Nor did he approve of the use of the boot.

Perhaps the most unusual decision ever given in boxing was rendered by referee Ern Fullalove at Melbourne Stadium some 50 years or so ago.

A Tasmanian heavyweight named Bill Turner, who was known as "Blinky Bill", was opposed to a Melbourne fighter named Bill Walsh. From the start of the fight it was obvious that Turner was trying to land a punch on the referee. Fullalove seemed to be the only man in the stadium who was not aware of the intent.

In the ninth round Turner landed a right on Fullalove's jaw. The referee did not go down but he rocked on his heels. Then he quietly grabbed Walsh by the elbow, escorted him to his corner, then walked over to Turner who was standing, hands at his side, watching the proceedings.

As he reached Turner, Fullalove crashed a right onto the Tasmanian's jaw, dropping him to the canvas. Then he crowned Walsh winner by knockout!

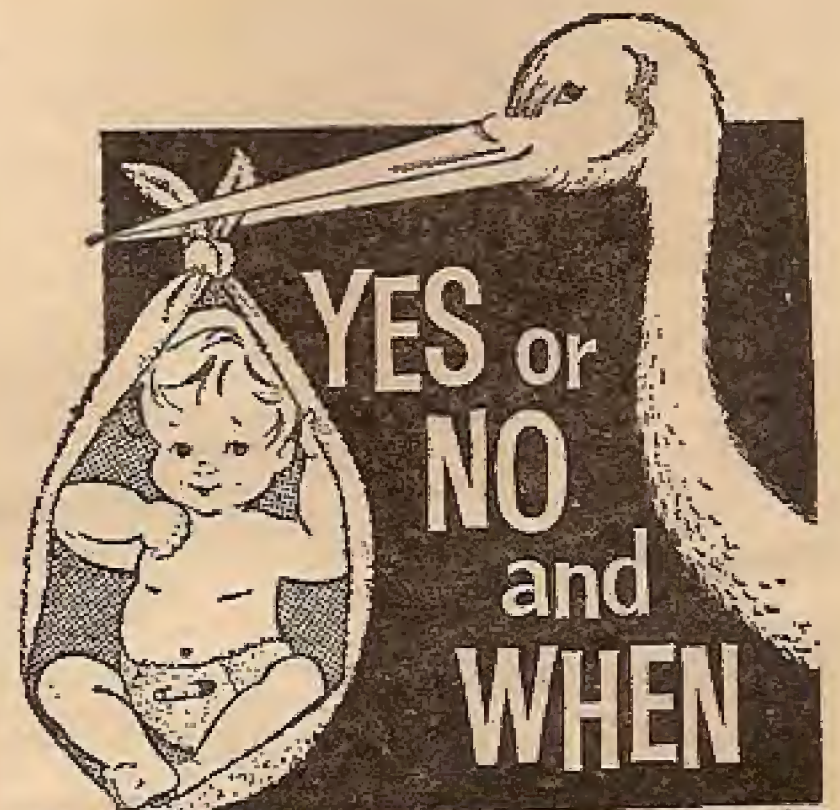
As a local newspaper reported: "This was a startling denouement—but undoubtedly it was the most popular decision ever given in a Melbourne ring."



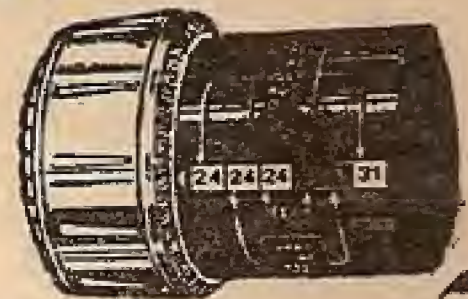
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(IN BLOCK LETTERS, PLEASE)

CAP THE KILLER — OR DIE!

(Continued from page 29)

"Just once is all it needs, one spark, from one little spot we missed with the oil . . ."

"But we've got to get the control head on—"

"That's right. But I just want to make one more try," Kilpatrick went on patiently. "I want to get it done and do it right. It's a cinch we won't do it if we have to come up every couple of seconds to get fresh air. So we've got to figure a way we can stay in there till the damn job gets done."

Thoroughly mystified, I accompanied Jim Kilpatrick on a quick trip to the field warehouse, where we picked up a portable blower with a flexible air hose he remembered he'd seen there. The hose was about six feet in length, three inches in diameter.

I thought Jim had taken in too much gas in his lungs and was getting silly. If he meant to blow out the cellar under the rig, he could never do it with that little hose, and he certainly couldn't do it till we capped the gasser. But I kept my thoughts to myself, and it was just as well. That wasn't what Jim had in mind at all.

When we got back to the rig Jim stationed one of the work gang on the floor above to keep the blower going and pass the hose through the floor to us. The men below would take turns grabbing gulps from the hose — much as a skin diver today can help a buddy whose tank has blown away by lending him breaths from his own air supply.

"How long will we stay in there?" Ryan asked.

"As long as it takes to finish the threading," Kilpatrick told him.

"What the heck?" I remember thinking. "How long can it take? Three minutes? Five minutes?"

I'll never forget that roar of gas blasting in my ears as together with the other men of the roustabout gang I crouched over the narrow casing, tugging and heaving at that control-head valve, and wondering if at any mo-

ment an accidental spark was about to blow me into oblivion.

The minutes ticked by while we tugged and lifted and adjusted, balanced and aligned and turned, to get those threads started. We failed and started again from the beginning, and again the threads failed to catch, the head would not turn.

The mouth of the air hose passed from man to man, each sucking lungful of the life-giving air, only slightly less foul than the poisonous stuff that clouded around us — but that difference, between life and death.

After 15 minutes in the dense atmosphere of the cellar, my head ached and I felt nauseous and sick. At the same time I had to stifle an uncontrollable impulse to laugh. I looked around and I could see all the men with me had the same look of wild strain. Even with the air hose from above, the polluted ocean we breathed took its deadly effect.

Next to giving way to hysteria and the giggling fits of the "gas-jag" narcosis, I had the impulse to break and run — to just get up and get out of there before I gave way and did something rash enough to result in my own death. It's hard to say what held that gang of men together, most of them strangers to each other prior to that year, unless it was the personality of Jim Kilpatrick, who continued to work steadily and evenly as the minutes we spent in the cellar lengthened.

I took another gasp from the air hose and my head cleared a little. Jim Kilpatrick signalled again to lift the control-head and balance it, and I pitched it. Together we jiggled and balanced exactly as we had already done a dozen or more times, and suddenly the valve seemed to jump under my hands. The threads had caught. We had her in perfect alignment.

Jim Kilpatrick signalled again, and we started the first slow turn of the control-head on the casing. The threads started and the head slowly, ponderously turned into place.

The look of satisfaction that passed from face to face of those tense, half-crazy men did not come from gas-sickness, and it was more than relief, it was a triumph. But nobody smiled. When the valve head was down tight, we took another gulp of air apiece. The foul air pumped down from above even seemed to taste better.

Jim Kilpatrick started the closing of the heavy strong valve on the control-head.

The whistling roar of the uncontrolled gas suddenly tapered off, and the comparative silence that replaced it struck us all like a clap of thunder.

We all looked at each other again. Kilpatrick nodded his head and we started out. We went fast.

Anything that happened then could have been an accident.

But I was sure it was no accident when I got another heavy elbow in my ribs and my mouth opened involuntarily and gasped for breath in that foul atmosphere of the cellar.

The last thing I know was a feeling of surprise and fury as I realised what had happened. I looked around at Charley Ryan's grinning face and then blacked out. When I recovered outside, Ryan's face bending over me anxiously was the first thing I could focus on.

I struggled to my feet.

"You tried to kill me," I coughed.

"I don't know what you're talking about. Anyhow, I didn't mean you to get hurt," Ryan said. He looked away from me and grinned kind of stupidly.

I didn't wait. I caught him with two hands in the middle of his stupid smirk and plastered it all over his face.

Nobody tried to keep us apart. After the strain of what I had gone through in that cellar, and then the elbow in the ribs, I don't think anybody could have stopped me then anyhow.

I never got such a bad beating in my life as I got from Charley Ryan that day.

I didn't hurt him much, either. But I kept coming off the ground.

The last time I came off the ground I had a rock in my fist, and I broke open the back of his head with it.

Charley Ryan and I spent a couple of hours in the infirmary. Nobody said anything about a fight. Jim Kilpatrick reported it as a "work accident", and no questions were asked.

Charley Ryan and I didn't exactly become close friends, but strangely enough we got along pretty well, the old antagonism wearing off about as fast as the bruises from the fight did.

What had been a group of individual hired hands had now welded into an effective working force with a common feeling of pride in the work we did and a real spirit of all-for-one and one-for-all.

What mattered more to me, I had weathered my initiation and I now had as rightful a place in the work gang as any man who had ever been there. I felt I had been accepted as an equal by the men I worked with.

The rest of the time I spent in Berger with that roustabout crew meant a lot of sweat and hard work, and there were more dangerous jobs.

But I look back at it now and think of Jim Kilpatrick and Charley Ryan and Fedders and the rest, and I know it was as happy a time as I'll ever spend in my life . . .

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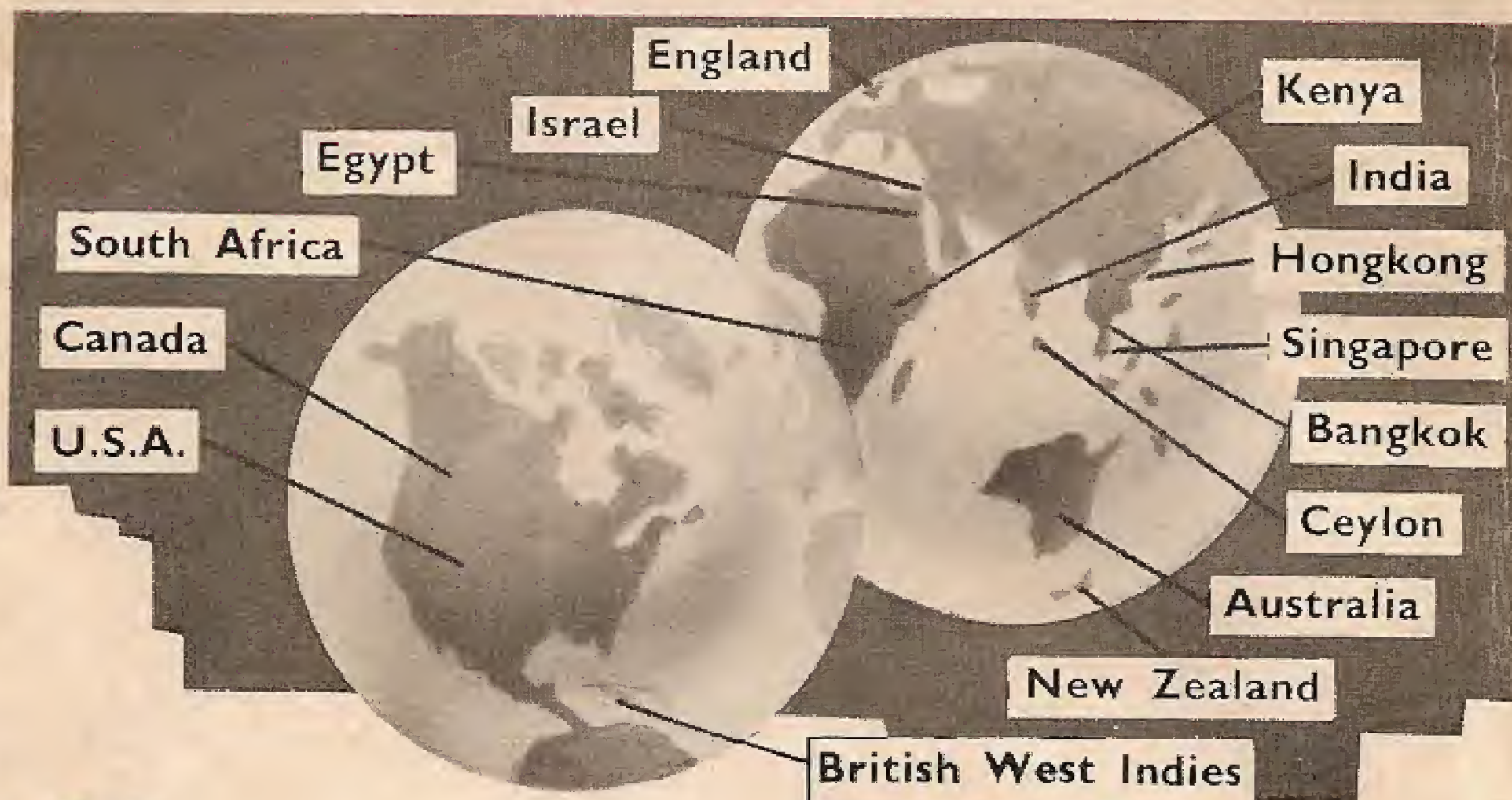
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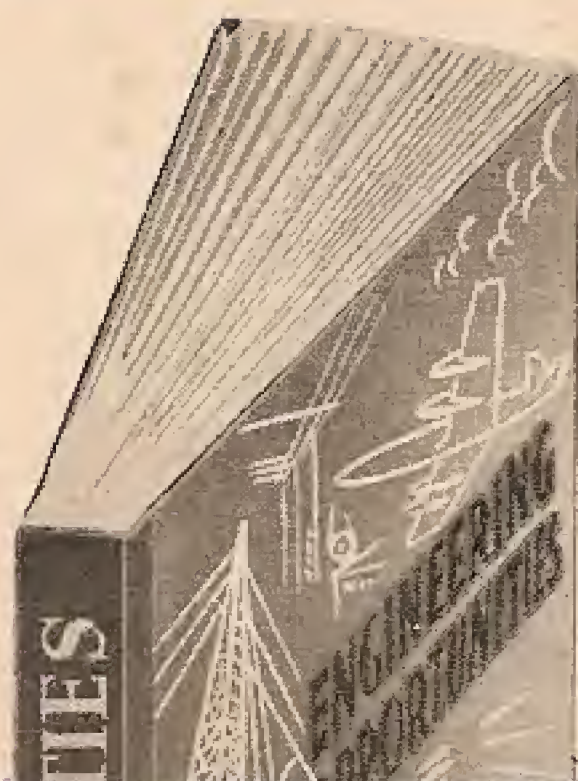
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